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SUMMER BOOKS SUPPLEMENT

Reviews by *Thomas J. Bray, Richard J. Neuhaus, Irwin M. Stelzer, Daniel Casse, Peter Skerry, Andrew Sullivan,* and *Louis Winnick*

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Is the presidency failing?

DONALD L. HOROWITZ

SINCE 1960, no President of the United States has served out his full term in honor. Every one has met with death, disgrace, or grave political disability. In fact, the trend goes further back, to Truman's inability to stand for reelection in 1952 or even to the interwar period, to the rejection of Wilson, the dishonor of Harding, and the helplessness of Hoover. Since World War II, Eisenhower and only Eisenhower has survived unscathed. The 1950s were a decade of such extraordinary political compliancy, and Eisenhower was so skillful at deflecting responsibility for unpopular action, that his presidency may fairly be assumed to be the exceptional one. Thereafter, Kennedy was assassinated. Johnson was undone by a war more unpopular than the war that undid Truman. Nixon was disgraced by scandal. Ford, unelected, left office tainted by the Nixon pardon, an act that produced a deep cleavage in public opinion. Carter was upended by perceived personality flaws as serious in their own way as Johnson's and by policy failings that appeared to flow from them. Now Reagan's presidency threatens to be swamped by a hybrid of scandal and policy debacle. The trend seems clear: the presidency magnifies the flaws leaders possess, and the public, seeing the flaws in bold relief, repudiates the incumbent, paving the way for a period of stalemate or enhanced authority for the other branches.

At one level, no doubt, Nixon's Watergate coverup, which produced committee-approved articles of impeachment, has nothing in

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common with Carter's immobilism and the peculiar pacifism of his Secretary of State. Truman and Johnson share wilful persistence in divisive regional wars; neither is of a piece with Reagan's failings. If there is a single common theme, that theme is deception, but even deception cannot really be laid at the door of Truman or Ford, despite suspicions of a "secret deal" for the Nixon pardon. The deception theme, I shall suggest later, does have some deep meaning, but for the moment it is the uncommonality of the events producing the common result that I wish to underscore. For if most presidents fail for different and unpredictable reasons, but fail nonetheless, perhaps the sum of their failures is greater than all of them together. What are the sources of these failures? Is anything different now? Perhaps the presidency is failing. Is it?

Cumulative failure

The case for cumulative failure is not difficult to make. For one thing, these failures transcend periods of popular activism and quietude. Johnson and Nixon fell during turbulent times, but Truman, Carter, and Reagan fell in more complacent times. Moreover, there is an element of cumulative causality at work. To the extent that Indochina undermined Nixon, it had already decapitated Johnson. What finished Ford was the unfinished matter of Nixon. Carter's weakness was, in part, the result of Johnson's and Nixon's perceived bellicosity. And, above all, Reagan's (not-so-)secret war in Nicaragua, including the transfer of funds from the Iran arms deal, was a response to congressional restrictions, which in turn were a response to Johnson's and Nixon's more or less unilateral conduct of hostilities. Similarly, Reagan's trade of arms for hostages may have proceeded from the keen knowledge that unredeemed hostages had previously toppled Carter.

Presidents, in short, are failing as a result of pursuing policies perceived to be necessary or constrained by the failure of their predecessors—and sometimes, as in the case of congressional restrictions on aid to the *contras*, policies made illegal as a result of the earlier debacles. With Reagan, the cumulative effect comes from responses to previous perceived failures in all directions—to Carter's weakness on terrorism (hence bargaining for hostages must be secret) and his problems with Iran (hence the hope of secretly turning Iran around), as well as to Johnson's and Nixon's inappropriate use of military force (hence secret aid, forbidden by law). When the various secret schemes are revealed and are shown to be intertwined, there is clear evidence of the cumulative impact of individual presidential failures. The disclosure of secret transactions, contradicting

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previous public statements, is redolent of the Watergate sequence of denial and revelation. The Reagan scandals are the pinnacle of cumulation.

Far from purging the presidency of problems that became apparent during the Johnson and Nixon Administrations, Watergate did little to change the institution and much to lower the threshold for presidential failure. The Watergate outcome did nothing to hinder the unfettered ability of the president to organize his office as he sees fit; or the character of the White House staff as the nerve center of the executive branch, countering tendencies to autarchy and unresponsiveness in the departments; or the frequent deadlock between the legislative and executive branches. Watergate and Vietnam, taken together, appear to have extended that deadlock from domestic to foreign policy, with an activist president seeking ways around restraints imposed by a gun-shy, cautious Congress. The profound popular recollection that the worst was indeed true in 1974 and therefore could again be true encourages those in adversary relationships with the president to ferret out scandal. Scandal in the White House, any White House, is now highly credible.

Distrust and disapproval

All of this takes place in a context of the more general distrust of government, revealed by the major national surveys for the last two decades. By 1968, that distrust was manifest in response to questions about the extent to which government officials are out to serve themselves or serve special interests, do not care about ordinary people, cannot be depended upon to do what is right, and are sometimes dishonest. By 1980, fully two-thirds of all respondents were distrustful of government, up from a mere 28 percent in 1958.

The decline of trust in government can be viewed as part of a much broader decline of confidence in institutions. Two-thirds of the decline between 1966 and 1976 was common to all institutions —governmental and nongovernmental—about which questions were asked. Still, governmental institutions led the decline of confidence, which then spread to other institutions.

To be sure, declining confidence coexisted comfortably with continued faith in the system. Survey respondents expressed pride in the political system by margins of four to one in 1972 and 1976. In 1977, 70 percent thought the system essentially sound. Distrust is directed entirely at the inadequate performance of officeholders. Continued faith in the system probably makes breaches of faith by leaders all the more serious and crisis-provoking. Here is a political system that is at once highly legitimate and highly unsatisfying. The

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problem of the contemporary presidency is set firmly in that duality. The presidency is an office idealized; the president is an occupant disappointing.

Although presidential failure may be a cumulative or progressive phenomenon, there is also much continuity in the oscillation of sentiment toward individual presidents since 1945. The Gallup Poll has been asking Americans for decades whether they approve of the way the president is conducting his office, and they have provided abundant evidence of inconstancy. At one point, 87 percent approved of Truman's conduct of the office, the highest postwar approval figure. At another, only 23 percent expressed approval of Truman, a low displaced only by Carter's 21 percent in July 1980. Truman's approval rating fluctuated by 64 percentage points, the greatest change for a president, but most presidents have experienced considerable volatility in their approval ratings. Typically, they start high and begin to decline soon thereafter, recovering slightly toward the end of the first term. Only Kennedy, with his short presidency, never dipped below 50 percent approval, but even he dropped 27 points; and Ford, in his even shorter presidency, fell by 34 points. For presidents serving more than four years, Eisenhower, with nearly continuous majority approval, is again a conspicuous exception. The average difference between high and low approval rates for presidents, including Reagan, is 41 points, as Table I shows.

Table I. Presidential Approval Since World War II[a]
(Percent expressing approval)

President	*High*	*Low*	*Difference*
Truman	87	23	64
Eisenhower	79	49	30
Kennedy	83	56	27
Johnson	80	35	45
Nixon	68	24	44
Ford	71	37	34
Carter	75	21	54
Reagan[b]	68	35	33
Mean	76	35	41

[a] *Source:* Gallup Poll data.
[b] Through January 1987.

Approval ratings are hardly a flawless measure of public opinion; the question is framed to emphasize the most current events in a presidency. Still, it is impressive just how variable perceived presidential performance is, a point underscored by rapidly changing attitudes toward Reagan's policies after the Iran-contra revelations.

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In January 1987, 60 percent expressed the hope that the policies of the next president would be different from Reagan's, up from 42 percent just four months earlier.

Overall, the highs and lows of presidential approval for 1969-87 are a good bit lower than the highs and lows for 1945-68—an average of 11 points lower—testifying to what may be a secular trend. (Reagan's high of 68 percent approval is, with Nixon's, the lowest of the postwar highs, hardly the mark of an invulnerable, "Teflon" president.) Many fewer respondents express "a great deal of confidence" in leaders of the executive branch or White House. The pre-Reagan high was only 39 percent in 1966-67, before Johnson's worst Vietnam problems, and the lows were 15 percent for 1973-74, Nixon's Watergate, and for 1978-80, Carter's "malaise" and hostage crisis. The "great deal of confidence" measure was up to 42 percent in 1984 but had fallen to 19 percent by the end of 1986. The average level of "great confidence" in the White House or executive branch for the whole period from 1966 to 1984 was only 21 percent. This compares to the average of 49 percent expressing great confidence in leaders of medicine and 32 percent in the Supreme Court. Of major American leaderships, only Congress, with an 18 percent average, and trade unions, at 14 percent, elicit lower average levels of confidence than the presidency. Taken together, the surveys are suggestive of the American tendency to be suspicious of powerholders, to be especially hard on postwar presidents, and to be harder still on post-1968 presidents. Presidential rejection has been both recurrent and, for two decades, accelerating.

An uncertain office

If we ask why Americans invest so much faith in the president and then so quickly reject him, the inquiry appropriately turns to the work of the Framers of the Constitution and produces two important conclusions. First, considerable equivocation attended the creation of the presidential office. Second, almost by accident, the Framers located the presidency in the vortex of the most complex political and personal feelings Americans could have. The expectations of the office—its constitutional status—and the affect directed toward it—its psychological status—are both suffused with ambivalence.

The Framers knew what they wanted the national legislature to do. What they had to work on was mainly how to compose the legislature, so as to secure the assent of the less populous states. The resolution of other issues, including the presidency, was often held hostage to this one. The carefully elaborated thought of Madison, so

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influential elsewhere in the Constitution, was least developed with respect to the executive. Conceiving of the office of president, empowering it, and agreeing on a suitable mode of electing the president all proved to be elusive tasks. The decisive work on them was done by committees, late in the convention. Even then, some fundamental issues were left unresolved. Article II of the Constitution, on the executive power, is far more cryptic than Article I, on the legislative power. Several strains of thought regarding executive power had contended during the convention, and the emergence of the document by no means signified that any one strain had prevailed. And because the Framers were not wholly clear on what they had created, elements of parliamentary supremacy and cabinet government survived the convention.

The presidency that emerged in the Constitution was primarily the outgrowth of two things the members of the 1787 convention did not want and two things they did. They wished to avoid creating a monarchy, and many equally distrusted the sovereignty of the legislature. The Framers wanted stability and a check on unwise legislation, governmental features that some of them came to identify with certain of the post-colonial state governorships.

Early in the convention, Hamilton had suggested a strong central government with a strong president. His plea, which included a remark that "the British Govt. was the best in the world,"[1] fell on deaf ears, and Hamilton was later accused of favoring monarchy. As colonials who had felt the brunt of the Crown at a time when it was unusually potent, the delegates were ill disposed to consider anything that smacked of elective monarchy. Echoing widespread sentiment at Philadelphia, George Mason opposed a single executive as an imitation monarchy, and Roger Sherman advocated an executive wholly responsible to the legislature. Executive power was, for most delegates, not a positive good.

Under the Articles of Confederation, there had been no confederal executive, except for the committees established by and responsible to the Congress. By 1787, the delegates understood the administrative shortcomings of that arrangement, visible as they were throughout the War for Independence. The alternatives the delegates were most familiar with, however, were the subdued governors who had succeeded the colonial governors in several states after 1776.

Existing state governments inspired the major proposals on the executive presented at the convention. Although they differed on

[1] Max Farrand, *Records of the Federal Convention of 1787* (rev. ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), Vol. 1, p. 288.

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other matters, both the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan proposed an executive chosen by and accountable to the legislature. The Virginia Plan did not specify the number of executives, whereas the New Jersey Plan expressly contemplated a plural executive. The latter also made the executive removable by Congress at the request of a majority of state executives. A separate, but weak and dependent, executive was intended.

The first strain manifest in the convention, then, was antimonarchical. It led to proposals endorsing legislative supremacy. During the colonial period, state assemblies, recapitulating the British struggles with the Crown a century earlier, had wrested concessions from colonial governors. After the American Revolution, state governors had been subordinated by legislatures and by executive councils appointed by the legislatures to control the governors. Legislative control of the executive was thus a powerful reflex.

What had brought the Framers to Philadelphia, however, was the palpable failure of the Articles of Confederation, whose most conspicuous feature was unbridled legislative domination. Irresponsible state legislatures had failed to respect property and been unable to preserve stability in the mid-1780s. Conservative as they were, many of the Framers feared the popularly elected branch. Their fears were given immediacy by the printing of paper money, the accommodation of debtors, and the disorder prevailing under the Articles, most recently illustrated by Shays's Rebellion of 1786. A revolt of the debtor masses, it had ended in capitulation by the Massachusetts legislature to the rebels' demand for tax relief. This example of the noxious character of popular rule was much on the Framers' minds as they contemplated the need for strong government. The second strain in evidence at the convention, then, was abhorrence of legislative supremacy. To those who shared that abhorrence, neither legislative election of the executive, nor a plural executive, nor a council to control the executive was admissible.

Between these poles of inhospitality to an autonomous executive and fear of popular domination, the convention drifted. Proposals to choose the president by direct popular vote were more than once beaten back by delegates from smaller states, who, having secured agreement to parity of representation in the Senate, did not wish to be outvoted in the presidential election. The powers of the new office were likewise uncertain, and the idea of a legislatively appointed council, to control the president, kept resurfacing.

In the end, these matters were resolved by a few delegates whose understanding and experience in the states differed from those of

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most delegates. Although legislative supremacy had prevailed in most states, executive power had not been subdued everywhere.

In Pennsylvania, unlike every other state with an executive council, the council was elected by direct popular vote, and its powers were provided in explicit terms. Although the Pennsylvania Council protested legislative infringements of its power, it, like other state executives, ended up feeble. Still, there was a principle of separate election there.

Alone among the states, New York had no council whatever. Its executive power was confided to a governor, directly elected for a three-year term and exercising broad powers borrowed from the Pennsylvania Constitution. New York's governor exercised his powers vigorously, frequently vetoing legislation and putting down disorder, including the spillover of Shays's Rebellion across the border. Slowly, the New York example made itself felt in neighboring states that sensed the lack of executive authority.

The New York experience established the utility of executive power and exemplified some of its indispensable features: a single executive, directly elected for a fixed term and possessing broad powers, especially the veto. All these features, save direct election, found their way into the Constitution. A Pennsylvanian, James Wilson, and a New Yorker in the Pennsylvania delegation, Gouverneur Morris, both keenly aware of the New York experience, had argued for a strong, independent, popularly elected executive. They had made some inroads before the whole body but never carried the point. Only in committee did they finally prevail. Wilson, who drafted the report of the Committee of Detail, insisted on the independence of the president, uncontrolled by any council, and he enhanced the powers accorded the president. Gouverneur Morris, the leading member of the Committee on Unfinished Business, organized the presidency, laid down its four-year term, and shaped an electoral college for presidential selection.[2] The electoral college made the plan more attractive to the small states than legislative election or direct popular vote would have been, and this fact made the final product impervious to opposition.

The work of Wilson's Committee of Detail certainly did not express "the will of the parent body,"[3] and the product of Morris's committee was acceptable only because it was so astute a compromise, breaking the deadlock over who would elect the president.

[2] The electoral college idea had been discussed inconclusively in earlier speeches on the floor, including one by Madison. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 109-11.

[3] Charles C. Thach, Jr., *Creation of the Presidency, 1775-1789* (2d ed.; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), p. 118.

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The advocates of what was called "a high mounted government" had prevailed behind the scenes over the more powerful "prejudices [against] the Executive," in Wilson's words, prejudices resulting from "misapplication of the adage that the parliament was the palladium of liberty."[4]

Presidents, firm and infirm

Although an independent presidency emerged in the document that issued from the convention, the antimonarchical currents of the convention survived it. When they examined their work, some of the delegates, fearful of monarchy, "stood aghast." "From an official designed to be, at the outset of the convention, a dependent of the legislature, the executive had developed into an independent figure of importance."[5] On the floor of the convention, so expansive a view of the office was exceptional, even among those with direct knowledge of the persistent meddling of the Confederation Congress in administrative details. Outside the convention, among a people steeped in revolutionary conceptions of popular sovereignty and suspicion of concentrated executive power, an office like the presidency was regarded with misgiving. When, in *Federalist* Nos. 69 and 70, Hamilton likened the office at once to the British monarch and the New York governor and commended the attributes of "energy . . . [d]ecision, activity, secrecy, and despatch" made possible by the provisions of Article II, he was not reflecting the consensus of the Framers. What made such an office palatable at all was the knowledge that George Washington would be its first occupant, perhaps for many terms.

The debates on ratifying the Constitution focused more on the establishment of a strong central government in general than on the presidency in particular. Many of the Anti-Federalists feared a strong Senate more than a strong presidency, but all feared the two in combination. Americans had spent a good deal of energy in defiance of authority. Behind seemingly innocuous, uncalculated executive action, they were recurrently able to find dark and sinister plots to establish tyranny. They nursed an abiding uneasiness with power, an uneasiness conspicuous at the convention and surviving it. The convention made available a single office, redolent of the British monarch, as an object for fears of conspiracy to establish tyranny. In a revolutionary polity, the presidency did not begin as a fully legitimated office.

[4] Farrand, *Records*, Vol. 2, pp. 300–1.

[5] Max Farrand, *The Framing of the Constitution of the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1913), p. 161.

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The problematic character of the office was illustrated by elements of cabinet government and parliamentary supremacy that survived its creation. Steeped in state practice, many of the Framers preferred, as we have seen, a council to limit the executive. Despite the dramatic departure of the convention from such arrangements, the beginnings of cabinet government were discernible in Hamilton's Treasury reports to Congress, as well as in his attempt to become prime minister under Washington, and even more prominently in the inconsistent cabinet practice of the first two presidents. As governors had earlier been outvoted by their councils, both Washington and Adams occasionally yielded to cabinet majorities. But both also took action on their own. On one such occasion, Madison protested that Washington, employing what Hamilton had justified as inherent executive power, was exercising a British royal prerogative that the president did not possess. It was Jefferson who finally subordinated the cabinet, assuming personal responsibility for the whole executive branch, and Jackson who denigrated the cabinet by disregarding it.

Nonetheless, the early impulses to confine the president survived. Legislative supremacy was not easily defeated. Beginning with Jefferson, and for twenty years thereafter, the president was, in practice, elected by the Republican Congress—the very scheme rejected in Philadelphia—and was essentially a creature of his legislative party. For some time, it was unclear whether the president had the power to remove an officer who had been confirmed by the Senate. The matter was narrowly settled in Washington's favor by Vice-President Adams's tie-breaking vote in the Senate. Had it come out otherwise, congressional control would probably have been unavoidable. As late as 1835, Tocqueville mused that the presidency was inherently a weak office, likely to be strengthened only in foreign affairs, as military power grew, and that in a conflict Congress would surely prevail over the president.

Popular early presidents often suffered eventual public rejection. By the end of his second term, Washington was held in such low esteem that he barely secured ratification of the Jay Treaty, averting war with Britain. Twice the Virginia legislature refused even to pass farewell resolutions commending his "wisdom." Jefferson, too, lost virtually all his support over an unpopular foreign policy, the embargo on trade with France and Britain. Accused of autocracy, he, like later presidents, refused to credit reports of his low standing even in his own party. To lose public regard at the end of one's term is not the same as to lose it in the middle. Still, rejec-

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tion of presidents, rooted in deep resentment of executive power, has early antecedents.

The Constitution in practice recapitulates the Framers' ambivalence about the executive. There have been weak presidents and strong presidents and, within presidencies, weak periods following strong periods. But strong presidents are mainly those who have the good fortune to serve during popular wars, depressions, and crises, when people feel helpless and in need of the single leader they otherwise spurn.

Hamilton had argued in *The Federalist* that a fixed four-year term would "contribute to the firmness of the Executive," enabling him "to dare to act his own opinion with vigor and decision" against the vagaries of public sentiment. The indirect election of the president by an *ad hoc* electoral college was also to be a support of executive firmness. Since Jackson's time, however, the electoral college has been transformed into a body reflecting the will of state electorates. What has evolved is a close approximation of the direct election of the president that was rejected by the convention because it would put the president at the mercy of the popular will.

More recent institutional changes have also deflected the expectation of the Framers that a directly elected Congress (or House) would be more closely accountable to public opinion than a president chosen by an electoral college. With the growth of interest groups (to some extent at the expense of parties), the decentralization of congressional business, and the increasing advantages of incumbency, Congress has become, not the successor to the populist state legislatures the Framers feared, but the frequent servant of myriad segmental interests, none of them necessarily majority interests. Changes in the presidential nomination process, on the other hand, have heightened the direct influence of the electorate in the choice of presidents. The four-year term remains—although the Nixon resignation is a precedent of uncertain future application—but little besides the fixed term induces a president "to dare to act his own opinion with vigor and decision," over any extended period, when the public has other ideas. In significant ways, the expectations of the Framers about the independence of the respective branches have been turned upside down. Presidents carry polls in their pockets.

Children, parents, and presidents

Despite the transformation of the institution, the presidency remains the lightning rod for American antimonarchical and anti-

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authoritarian sentiment. The presidency is the central object of childhood idealization and adult disillusion in politics.

The president is the first major political figure of whom American children are aware. Studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s showed children's views of the president to be unfailingly positive.[6] The president was dependable, infallible, benevolent, and likeable. Adults were five times more willing to criticize the president than children were. Images of benevolence, however, declined with each school year until, by about eighth grade, the more cynical, adult, antipower view was in place.

In such studies, the president was seen as the unconscious analogue of parents and other authorities. The death of a president sometimes produces grief and mourning on the part of private citizens that would ordinarily be reserved for parents. The connections between parents and presidents are also visible in the change in affect toward both that occurs at adolescence.

For some time, it was generally accepted that the early positive view of the president created a reservoir of support for the political system as children grew older. But suppose, during Watergate, children received a less benevolent view of the president than their predecessors had. Would this predispose them as adults toward less favorable views of the president or render them more subject to change from approval to disapproval? Since attitudes grow more negative after childhood, a low starting point may produce a lower ending point. Recent presidential failures may thus be traceable to the psychological impact of earlier events.

Although the empirical studies are not wholly reconcilable, by the early 1970s there was evidence of declining support for the president, even among young children.[7] The declines accelerated with Watergate and were very sharp by 1974. But, significantly, negative views of the president did not transfer to American political institutions in general. Moreover, there is reason to think these negative

[6] See, *e.g.*, Fred I. Greenstein, "The Benevolent Leader: Children's Images of Political Authority," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 54 (December 1960), pp. 934-43; Robert D. Hess and David Easton, "The Child's Image of the President," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 24 (Winter 1960), pp. 632-44.

[7] For a sampling, see the symposium in the *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (October 1975); Robert G. Meadow, "Information and Maturation in Children's Evaluation of Government Leadership During Watergate," *Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 35 (December 1982), pp. 539-44; Edward Carmines, "Decline in Presidential Idealization Among Adolescents: Watergate Created?" *Adolescence*, Vol. 16 (Summer 1981), pp. 487-92; Troy A. Zimmer, "The Impact of Watergate on the Public's Trust in People and Confidence in the Mass Media," *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 5 (March 1979), pp. 743-51; F. Christopher Arterton, "Watergate and Children's Attitudes Towards Political Authority Revisited," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 9 (Fall 1975), pp. 477-96.

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views did not endure. Negative views of Nixon were strongly correlated with the amount of information about Watergate to which the children were exposed, suggesting that views of the president are not just a function of idealized family relationships but are also affected by what children are learning about events. A study of adults' trust in people, which showed sharp declines during Watergate, also showed strong rebounds by 1976. We do not have an adequate follow-up study of the childhood generation of 1969 to 1974 as adults. Perhaps there is some lingering Watergate effect, but most of the earlier cynicism probably dissipated by the 1980s. Attitudes toward the president are highly ephemeral and (even for children) dependent on the news media. As positive attitudes can decline in a crisis, negative attitudes can subside as the crisis abates.

If we cannot attribute the current predicament of the presidency to negative views of the office formed by youth during Watergate, there is nevertheless one aspect of growing up in America that does seem inimical to presidential approval over the long term: the unusually democratic, egalitarian family. Erik H. Erikson, in his book *Childhood and Society*, describes the modal American family as guarding the right of its members not to be dominated. Even love is a bit subdued, lest its partiality to one object at a time interfere with the right of each family member to pursue his interests. The prevention of autocracy in the family produces, according to Erikson, an undogmatic people, willing to compromise. There is often no major adolescent conflict with the father, in contrast to Europe. The American adolescent mistrusts the individualism displayed by politicians, and he is plainly nonideological. The American family is hostile to privilege, tolerant of divergent interests, constantly engaged in give and take. The family process is, as Erikson says explicitly, isomorphic with the legislative process. It is also, as he does not say explicitly, ill at ease with an office resembling the independent presidency intended by the minority of Framers who brought it into being.

Many observers would agree that in recent decades the American family has become even less authoritarian than before. The president, on the other hand, is *the* authority figure *par excellence*, and lower approval rates overall may be related to this contrast. While children may learn to idealize the president early on, the whole course of family life may be at odds with consistent adult reverence for so elevated, outwardly powerful, even regal, a figure as the president appears to be. Perhaps American revolutionary history has fed the antimonarchial strain into the democratic family, whence it returns into the polity.

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Beneath declining approval

Attitudes embedded in the national culture do not, by themselves, account for the recurrent pattern of sharply declining approval within each presidency. High approval at the outset of a presidency —almost always higher than the president's share of the popular vote a few months earlier—followed by a more or less swift decline, recapitulates the course of positive childhood attitudes toward the president, which declines steeply with the onset of adolescence. Without much deeper investigation of both phenomena, this point cannot be pushed very far, but the analogy (if that is all it is) has one immediate benefit. It suggests very clearly that the early approval ratings are not wholly directed at any given president: they reflect idealization, akin to the childhood idealization of the office.

Across presidencies, declining popularity cannot be explained by objective factors, such as economic conditions. Expectations of what a president will be able to accomplish are more important. Expectations decline over the course of a presidency, and declining expectations are highly correlated with declining approval. It had earlier been theorized that less well-educated respondents would begin with higher expectations than better-educated respondents, that disappointment of the less sophisticated would account for most of the decline in approval. At least for the Carter presidency and the Reagan first term, this theory turns out to be without foundation.[8] In general, expectations are evenly spread—and evenly spread over time—across educational levels. If there are unrealistic expectations at work—and what is that but idealization, especially after recurrent failures in preceding presidencies?—those expectations are widely diffused in public opinion.

Lack of party loyalty is much more important than lack of sophistication in explaining volatile approval ratings. A recent study suggests far more movement of individual respondents over time—especially from approval or disapproval to "undecided" and then back again—than might have been suspected.[9] Respondents with the most changeable attitudes were those least involved in politics, and strong partisans, whether Democratic or Republican, were least likely to change their opinion over time. Over the last twenty-five years, party identi-

[8] James A. Stimson, "Public Support for American Presidents: A Cyclical Model," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 40 (Spring 1976), pp. 1-21; Lee Sigelman and Kathleen Knight, "Why Does Presidential Popularity Decline?" *Ibid.*, Vol. 47 (Fall 1983), pp. 310-24; Sigelman and Knight, "Expectation/Disillusion and Presidential Popularity: The Reagan Experience," *Ibid.*, Vol. 49 (Summer 1985), pp. 209-13.

[9] Kent L. Tedin, "Change and Stability in Presidential Popularity at the Individual Level," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 50 (Winter 1986), pp. 555-62.

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fication has been declining, as more voters have become independents, or switched parties, or voted split tickets. Declining party loyalties probably bear much of the responsibility for the especially tenuous approval ratings of recent presidents. Strong party loyalty can cement people's ties to an incumbent they might otherwise come to dislike. The rejection of presidents is a common occurrence in American history, but it seems easier to achieve now, and the decline of party loyalty furnishes a solid basis for understanding a good part of the change.

Distrust of authority goes hand in hand with fear of deception. As Samuel P. Huntington and others have noted, Americans recurrently experience "fear and suspicion concerning the existence of concealed power." The trend goes all the way back to the assertions, made with deepest conviction, about the conspiratorial schemes of George III and his ministers. American history is filled with farfetched allegations of such schemes—against Freemasons, popes, communists, and so on. But rarely have such allegations focused so exclusively on the presidency. By far the most powerful conspiracy of the postwar period was that concocted by Joseph McCarthy. His allegations, however, ran to the State Department more than they did to the White House. To be sure, McCarthy detected schemes that led to presidential giveaways to Stalin, but the governmental institution on which he focused most was the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy, however, is assuredly not the focus of post-1960 suspicions: the White House is.

The growth of the White House staff since 1960 probably makes the White House a more plausible target than it was earlier. But, with the exception of Carter, the focus of suspicion recurrently extends to the president himself in a way that was simply not true earlier. Perhaps Johnson's vaunted manipulativeness and Nixon's "tricky Dick" image conditioned later public responses. It seems more likely, though, that the taming of the departments and the flow of executive branch power to the White House, all through this period, are the main ingredients in the increasingly focused suspicion.

Americans expect deception in high places, and the highest place is the presidency. Nothing in Watergate was regarded with such seriousness as the "coverup." Little in Indochina was believed to be as heinous as the "secret bombing of Cambodia." When it is revealed that a relatively well-trusted president was saying one thing and doing another, the public registers its disapproval, and congressional committees prepare to nail down, not an assessment of the policies in conflict, but, above all, presidential complicity in the deception.

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Congress: clothed in the law

Of the institutions that define the incapacity and the scandals that make for presidential failure, perhaps the foremost is Congress. To be sure, the institutional interest of Congress in presidential failure is tempered by the interest of congressional members of the president's own party in reelection; but between elections Congress can benefit from exposing executive misfeasance. At such times, the branch asserted to be mired in "special interests" is able to support rectitude and clothe itself in the law.

It is not really possible to have a scandal or even a single profound policy failure in Congress. Congress is not a coherent, corporate body; it cannot be accountable as one. The major congressional scandals of the postwar period, most of them involving sexual or payroll peccadilloes, did not rub off on the institution. The presidency, by contrast, remains a corporate entity, on which responsibility can ultimately be fixed. In fact, its corporate character is a major reason for the expansion of the White House staff, to accomplish something close to what the president wants to accomplish. The White House is a creature of its leader's style of advice taking and decision making, as virtually every study of the presidency attests. The White House is also a creature of its leader's personal failings, whether they be Carter's excessive concern with detail or Reagan's neglect of it, Johnson's humiliation of subordinates or Nixon's encouragement of their fortress mentality. In Congress, the styles and flaws of members are mainly interpreted as idiosyncracies of their office; they rarely extend even to the committees they chair. Misfeasance disgraces only individuals.

The approval ratings of Congress typically rank lower than those of the executive. Congress runs fairly consistently on low to moderate levels of public confidence. The equivalent of high presidential approval does not exist for Congress—another proof of the unique character of the presidency. The approval relationship of the branches, however, is reversed in times of presidential failure. When Johnson's popularity was waning in 1966 and 1967, Congress edged ahead of him. In the pre-Watergate Nixon years, Nixon ran several points ahead of Congress, but the televised Senate Watergate hearings changed this dramatically. By September 1973, only 19 percent of respondents had "a great deal of confidence" in the president, compared to 30 percent with a great deal of confidence in congressional leaders—this at a time of markedly low confidence in institutions overall. Too much scandal is dangerous, of course, for the lack of confidence may be generalized, but misfeasance involving execu-

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tive branch violation of law is more often than not in the interest of Congress, and its members have long known this to be true.

In exposing misconduct, Congress works in tandem with the press. In fact, as Stephen Hess has shown in his book, *The Washington Reporters*, the most important news stories about the White House come from congressional sources. Congressional staffs have grown about eight-fold in the postwar period, so there is no shortage of sources. Nor is there any shortage of motivation. Especially since the popularization of the presidential nomination process, through the increased importance of primaries and the less professional composition of party conventions, the president is only nominally the leader of his party. Presidents are often inclined to think that they got to the White House by themselves, that they know the public interest better than Congress does. Such views and the resulting neglect of Congress, which reached its apogee in the Carter years, sometimes create the desire for vengeance.

The White House: coherently irregular

The vulnerability of the White House is vastly enhanced by the unprofessional character of the White House staff and its loyalty to each serving president. The whole point of the White House staff is that it constitute an assembly of loyalists who can counter the centrifugal tendencies permeating American government and bring a measure of coherence to the president's policy and its implementation. The president is entitled to organize his office as he sees fit, and this means virtually no carryover of personnel from the previous administration. The importance of outsiders in the White House goes back to Andrew Jackson's kitchen cabinet, which displaced the nominal cabinet, and in this century to Woodrow Wilson, who brought not only Colonel House to the White House but several of House's relatives as well. The stronger the aspirations of the president, the more pervasive the tendency to assemble strong-willed outsiders on the inside. Very often, the main experience those outsiders bring to the White House is service to the president in prior official incarnations (especially governorships) or in a long series of primary campaigns. As the Nixon, Carter, and Reagan administrations attest, neither is optimal experience for governing at the center.

From time to time, Congress has tried to control aspects of White House organization. The Council of Economic Advisers and the National Security Council were created by Congress as a check on Truman. He responded by declining to call upon their services. The attempt to regularize the presidency is uniformly regarded as an

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attempt to weaken it. The hallmark of the White House staff is its irregularity. The very purpose of the staff is to accomplish things, in the face of deliberately inertial constitutional arrangements, to accomplish things in spite of Congress, occasionally against Congress, and to do so with Hamiltonian "secrecy and despatch"—in short, to do things that will, on occasion, incur profound disapproval and utilize means that are not bureaucratically regular but idiosyncratic to each president. The enormous growth of the staff in recent decades multiplies the opportunities for irregular action.

Cautioning against a plural executive, Hamilton, in *The Federalist*, warned that a proliferation of personnel would make personal accountability for executive misdeeds difficult to establish. It would deprive the public of "the opportunity of discovering with facility and clearness the misconduct of the persons they trust, in order either to their removal from office, or to their actual punishment in cases which admit of it." As the protracted crises of the Nixon and Reagan Administrations show, Hamilton was correct. In public psychology and in legal conception, we have the unitary executive of the Framers; in the difficulty of tracing responsibility and in the accompanying immobilism, we have something closer to the plural executive they rejected.

Reveling in revelations

In exposing misconduct, the press plays a central role. Volatile presidential approval ratings insure that the president is concerned with his public audience. This dramaturgical imagery is appropriate in the light of recent developments in the mass media. Here I refer not merely to the enormous influence of television—98 percent of all homes have one, and 50 percent have two or more—or to the now well-known career rewards of investigative reporting. Rather, I have three specific things in mind. The first is the extent to which presidential failure is good business for the mass media. The second is the selective memory function of the media, which at first exaggerates what a new president can accomplish but later underscores similarities between current crises and earlier ones. The third is the effect of differentiation and synergism among the mass media.

Like Congress, the press thrives on the slowly unfolding story behind the scenes. When the executive editor of the *Washington Post* confesses, of the Iran-*contra* revelations, that he has not enjoyed himself so much since Watergate, he may be expressing excessive professional exuberance. The shareholders presumably have additional reasons for enjoyment. It is not merely that the *Post* became a truly

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national newspaper in the course of Watergate but that it and the *New York Times* became major national news services, with greater authority (and earning power?) than the established wire services. Similar points could be made with respect to television news programs and coverage of Senate hearings, which in ordinary times produce poor ratings. The point is so obvious it is virtually never made. Audiences are more attentive over longer periods at times of domestic crisis than at virtually any other time. The press may be a public service, but it is assuredly in the private sector.

Both the press and television define news to be something exceptional rather than something routine. Whereas social science seeks recurrent patterns, journalism seeks deviations from recurrent patterns. The deviations, however, must be comprehensible in terms of *some* past practice. Hence, in the case of contested policy decisions, as in the case of scandals, there is a strong propensity to think in terms of analogies. Nicaragua may be "just like" Vietnam, and the Iran-*contra* affair may be "just like" Watergate. Here, again, cumulative crisis enters.

Quantitative study of the traditional press "honeymoon" with the winner of a presidential election shows a change after Nixon. During their transition periods, both Carter and Reagan received more negative treatment in the national press than Nixon had in 1968-69.[10] Presidential failures cast long shadows over later presidents, whose transparent strategy is to find ways to make the analogies look far-fetched. In Reagan's case, this means to avoid at all costs conducting himself "just like Nixon." Vietnam, Watergate, and the resignation of Nixon stalk presidents decades later, if only because of the need of journalists to supply some context for events. Journalists looked with incredulity on Reagan's "Teflon" presidency, one suspects, because they could no longer imagine a president not under siege as operating in normal conditions. They reflected disbelief at his failure to fail, as other presidents had. There is now an expectation of failure, and Reagan is fulfilling it.

Beyond the common definition of news, there is a division of labor between the press and television. Television is a medium that flourishes by focusing on people, not institutions. Although moving and visual, television cannot show a process. The machinations of political interests in the corridors of the Capitol make good print copy, but they do not fit on the screen. Stories about Congress are more common in newspapers; stories about the White House are

[10] Karen S. Johnson, "The Honeymoon Period: Fact or Fiction?" *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol. 62 (Winter 1985), pp. 869-76.

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more common on television. Television is the president's medium. It will make him look better when he seems to be good, worse when he seems to be bad. It will report his summit meetings with fanfare, his Cuban missile crisis with gravity: it has a tone of voice. It will show his flaws in microscopic detail. It showed Ford stumbling off an airplane and stumbling over Eastern Europe's freedom from Soviet domination. It showed Carter stumbling in a race. It showed Ford and Carter as stumbling presidents. It showed Johnson and Nixon entombed in the White House while democratic protest swirled outside. Ever personalistic, it serves to attribute blame. But it can do none of this without the print media.

Newspapers uncover the stories that television popularizes. Newspapers report details of inside maneuvering, which the nightly news typically portrays as the difference between what was said and what was really done. The two together are perfectly positioned to cater to the public's suspicion of deception. The press finds, confirms, and certifies the facts. Television disseminates those facts and alerts the audience to the next day's press revelations. Television may be the more trusted medium, on which two-thirds of Americans rely for their news, but it enjoys that status because of its synergistic relations with the print media.

Parliamentary temptations

There are recurrently those who want to alter the presidency. A century ago, Henry C. Lockwood wrote a book called *The Abolition of the Presidency* (1884), arguing for its replacement with an executive council, on the Swiss model. A year later, Woodrow Wilson published *Congressional Government*, in which he suggested that Congress was so dominant the president could almost be a civil servant. An Anglophile, Wilson admired Gladstone's England. He particularly preferred the coherence of policy emerging from open debate and a responsible cabinet to the incoherence of congressional committee government and the purely ministerial functions of cabinet secretaries in the United States. Wilson favored a parliamentary system, and his hero in the Philadelphia Convention was neither James Wilson nor Gouverneur Morris but Roger Sherman, the apostle of legislative supremacy.

Wilson was reacting to the weak presidencies after Lincoln. With the presidency of Grover Cleveland, he changed his view. Others, however, have followed in his path, typically when presidents were weak or national problems seemed so urgent as to demand structural change.

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The latest entry is the work of James L. Sundquist and the Committee on the Constitutional System.[11] To Sundquist, the major problems of American politics are "failed presidents" and "divided government," in which the White House is held by one party, Congress by the other. The Nixon resignation, far from helping to destabilize later presidents, was a "useful precedent" for those times when a president "has discredited himself beyond recovery." The problem was the inability of Congress to remove Nixon by a vote of no confidence.

Now, too, Sundquist looks to the parliamentary system as "a source of ideas for incremental steps that might bring more unity to the American government," if adaptable to American conditions. He would permit members of Congress to sit in the cabinet and provide a mechanism for new national elections, at the instance of the president, or the House, or the Senate, so "either branch could challenge the other to a showdown, with the people to decide." As things now stand, the "United States is in bondage to the calendar," so that unfit presidents (he cites Herbert Hoover, among others) cannot be removed and interparty-interbranch deadlocks cannot be resolved. Such a change would be the boldest departure at a single stroke since the Philadelphia Convention.

It is too bold for public opinion. Even at low points in public confidence, survey respondents have overwhelmingly attributed the failings of government to bad leadership, rather than systemic defect, and have shown themselves open only to changes that would recruit different leaders or otherwise make the existing system work better. In 1980, a survey found that 51 percent of Americans explicitly preferred a situation in which no one party controls both the presidency and the two houses of Congress; only 36 percent preferred one-party control of both branches. By 1984, these percentages were 54 to 39. The public is firmly attached to the separation of powers and to interbranch-interparty checks and balances.

That attachment, however, is not the only problem with the current constitutional Anglophilia. The assumption that, in the United States, with its legislative entrepreneurs, the threat of a no-confidence vote would help break interbranch deadlock, rather than exacerbate that problem, is entirely fanciful. The further assumption that termination of a failed presidency would produce a successful successor is based on the belief that the failures are idiosyncratic. But one failed president has been followed by another. A

[11] Sundquist, *Constitutional Reform and Effective Government* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1986); *A Bicentennial Analysis of the American Political Structure* (Washington, D.C.: Committee on the Constitutional System, 1986).

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no-confidence mechanism would be likely to quicken the tempo of such replacements, sending the electorate to the polls more often and placing candidates further in debt to the interest groups and campaign financiers that, as Sundquist recognizes, already detract from party cohesion. A no-confidence vote might change a president quickly enough, but it would foreshorten the investigation of wrongdoing in the executive branch and so undermine the public sense that ultimately the system gets to the bottom of things—an especially important sense to satisfy, given the deep American belief in executive deception.

The Sundquist program goes beyond parliamentary innovations. It is sensitive, for example, to the unfortunate effects of declining party loyalties and contains some interesting proposals to counter ticket-splitting. But it does not recognize that if there is to be a partial remedy for presidential failure, the remedy is more apt to be found in the presidential selection process than in the presidential removal process. Parliamentary inspiration confuses the search for remedies. The idea of placing senators and congressmen, with outside bases of support, in the cabinet is neither conducive to presidential effectiveness nor even in line with recent cabinet practice in Britain, where Mrs. Thatcher has managed to avoid the advice of excessively independent ministers and to dismiss them from the cabinet as she sees fit. In a country lacking British deference to constituted authority, a major dose of parliamentary innovation would produce precisely the legislative domination the Framers feared. In the end, it is difficult to improve on the verdict of Harold Laski (who knew both systems) that "it is impossible to graft bits of the parliamentary system" onto the American system.

An emerging pattern

Does the evidence we have reviewed merely suggest that the presidency is in the same condition as it has always been? Historical continuities certainly stand out. The suspicion that executive authority will turn to tyranny has never been far below the surface. Public opinion has always been fickle, even rejecting the most popular of presidents. Parliamentary impulses, going right back to 1787, surface at times of presidential difficulty. They will no doubt do so again, with attempts to regularize the White House staff and appointments by making them more acceptable to Congress. Power has always flowed from as well as to the White House.

There are, however, new elements in the situation of the last two decades. The decline in party identification is palpable. A pres-

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ident can no longer depend on a large core of committed supporters who will stay with him through thick and thin. Likewise, with the tenuous bonds of common party across the branches loosened further by changes in the presidential nominating process, there is less restraint in Congress on benefiting from protracted crisis. Bigger congressional and White House staffs allow more opportunity for things to go wrong and more opportunity to discover mischief. Legal restrictions deriving from previous crises often require consultation with Congress before executive action is taken, institutionalizing opportunities for confrontation as much as for consultation. Finally, there is the habituating impact of five consecutive presidential failures.

Harder to pin down but vitally important are qualitative changes in the formation and impact of public opinion. Where once the authority of presidents depended on their persuasive power with key elites, to some extent apart from public opinion, now elite and mass opinion feed each other. Governmental and media leaders alert the public to the importance of problems in the executive branch, and those elites then pay serious attention to the public opinion they have helped arouse. In good times, presidents play to favorable opinion, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure when approval ratings inevitably sink. Elite opinion has been democratized. There is in place a formidable, if inchoate, opposition to presidents, ready to be activated at any sign of trouble, and the trouble reflex is in excellent condition.

It would be ahistorical to assume these new conditions are permanent. Previous periods of presidential weakness have passed. Eventually, this one may, too, but what we are witnessing now is not just more of the same.

Do any consequences attach to increasing presidential failure? Sharply declining popularity is not tantamount to complete ineffectiveness. Studies of the relationship between presidential popularity and legislative success turn up few consistent patterns. The conventional wisdom that a president at the peak of his public approval can get anything he wants, while a discredited president can get nothing, appears to be wrong.

Presidential failure in foreign affairs is an altogether different matter. The Framers expected the president, or the president and an indirectly elected Senate, to play the leading role in foreign affairs, where decisiveness counted. Jefferson was of the view that diplomacy must be "executive altogether." Congressional involvement for two decades has been heavily biased toward restraint overseas. In part, this is because international politics requires action on

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the basis of diffuse dangers and abstract balances of power, before threats get close to home. Congress does not conceive of problems in this way; it responds to perceptible pulls and tugs. In part, the propensity to think in terms of analogies is also at work. Vietnam is still a powerful analogy. And in part, too, the travail of the president in foreign policy is a mark of how difficult are the problems, how various the constraints, impinging on the office.

One of those constraints—critical public opinion—has grown at the same time as a key presidential resource—the leeway that derives from party loyalty among the public—has declined. Anyone who views with less than equanimity the emerging pattern of presidential failure might well pay close attention to the revitalization of party and party loyalty in American politics. The design of the Framers was such that the functioning of institutions depends on small balances, and the balances underlying the presidency have shifted. The result is that the president has not been able to carry the public very far in foreign policy. Distrust of executive power is part of the culture that prevents tyranny, but it can also inhibit leadership in a world in which other countries have an abundance of executive power. It is remarkable how much the Reagan foreign policy resembles the Carter foreign policy it was supposed to displace. Tempted to show strength in Beirut, Reagan withdrew when the marines were attacked, preferring to fight only where it was safe to do so, on the ground in Grenada and in the air over Libya. For both Carter and Reagan, fighting seemed so implausible an option that enemies were able to pick away at American interests and to take hostages with impunity.

Presidents have always had to trade off their view of what the national interest demanded against what their popularity would allow. With popularity volatile, however, even an ideological president like Reagan has had to scale down his conception of national interest. Add to this the usual American impatience for quick results —Americans declare war on poverty and then promptly surrender— coupled with the unlikelihood of quick results on most difficult problems of international relations, and there is little basis for steady foreign policy in the absence of direct, dire threats to national security. When he traded arms for hostages in Iran, Reagan must have understood very well that his tough, publicly declared policy lacked credibility in Tehran.

Of the three main contributions the United States Constitution has made to the art of government—a federal republic in a continental country, judicial review, and the presidency—the separately

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elected executive is in many ways the most remarkable. A century after the British had subjected their monarch to parliament, the Americans gambled on an executive elected outside the legislature. It was a fortunate stroke—one now increasingly imitated in other democracies—for it created an executive able to speak with one voice for a complex government, its powers separated and layered, a government that could otherwise not speak coherently at all. Relatively little value was placed by the Framers on getting things accomplished, and direct responsiveness to the people was, to them, more a vice than a virtue. The fixed term—being "in bondage to the calendar"—insured that the president would not serve at the pleasure of Congress or of a fickle public opinion. To the extent that this innovation is in danger, the presidency is failing.

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Religion, textbooks, and the common school

CHARLES L. GLENN

As governmental pressure toward uniformity becomes greater, so strife becomes more bitter, as to whose unity it shall be. Probably no deeper division of our people could proceed from any provocation than from finding it necessary to choose what doctrine and whose program public educational officials shall compel youth to unite in embracing. Ultimate futility of such attempts to compel coherence is the lesson of every such effort . . .

West Virginia *v.* Barnette *(1943)*

SEVERAL CASES that are making their way through the federal court system are causing alarm among supporters of public education. In a Tennessee case, the court found that a local school system violated the First Amendment rights of parents and students by requiring that the latter read a particular series of texts that violated their religious beliefs. In an Alabama case, the court found that the use of certain textbooks in public schools represented an unconstitutional "establishment of religion."

A spokesman for the National Education Association, the larger of the two unions of educators, commented that the ruling in the Tennessee case, *Mozert* v. *Hawkins County*, "creates chaos in the classroom." Anthony Podesta, president of People for the American Way (PAW), predicted that the ruling would lead to "the disintegration of public school classrooms . . . chaos in the public schools . . . a recipe for disaster."

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In the Alabama case, the brief filed on behalf of twelve parents intervening (with support from PAW) for the defense claimed that victory for another group of parents who are the plaintiffs would be "disastrous for . . . the public schools' goal of preparing our young for participation in a democratic and pluralistic society." In such an event it would "be difficult, if not impossible, to stop short of dismantling the entire system of public education as we know it." Public education would, indeed, "become impossible." After the ruling, the chairman of PAW referred to it as "judicial book-burning."

Other reactions are more moderate. Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, insisted that the Tennessee ruling was "not the end of the world." Jewish groups, ordinarily very sensitive to anything that looks like a Christian agenda for public education, have responded cautiously; several expressed concern that the position taken by PAW against accommodating the concerns of Fundamentalist parents might be used against those of Jewish parents in other situations.

Perhaps the most interesting comment came from an official of the American Library Association, a leader in the fight against "censorship." Judith Krug is reported as saying: "The question is whose values are going to be taught, the parents' or the state's. There's always a battle for children's minds." That is indeed the perennial question in education, whether the state has a right (or a duty) to insist upon compulsory socialization of children in values that conflict with those of at least some parents, in the name of some higher social good. There is always a battle for children's minds.

What is really going on in Tennessee and Alabama? Does the public school stand at Armageddon, or are these cases merely one of the periodic flaps that led Diane Ravitch to refer to American education since 1945 as "the troubled crusade"?

A little of both. The actual "relief" sought by the plaintiffs in Tennessee and in Alabama could have been provided, without litigation, with relative ease by the school systems affected: excusal of some students from certain reading lessons in Hawkins County, Tennessee; a review of textbooks in Alabama to eliminate those that, on a fair reading, truly "advance Humanism." I have argued, in an education monthly, that we public educators can and should adjust to such demands as we responded, a decade ago, to concerns about the treatment of race and gender in the curriculum.

There is a deeper level to the issue, however, that justifies concern among supporters of the present system of public education.

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The plaintiffs in the two cases challenge, in different ways, the "common school" itself, at least in its present form, and they do so at the most basic level of constitutional principle. Their immediate demands could be accommodated with relative ease, but the issue that they are raising will not go away. Sooner or later, we will have to deal with it in the interest of justice and of sound education.

Does the common public school, as the plaintiffs in Alabama charge, inculcate a distinctive ideology, offensive to the beliefs of many parents, that can rightly be characterized as a religion? That would be a profound injustice. Or is the purpose of the school already stretched so thin, already so scattered and distracted, that the coherence and integrity essential to its mission have been lost? That truly would be a disaster for education. It may be, then, that both sides are right in this controversy; if so, their concerns should move to the top of our policy agenda.

How can a public school have the coherence, the "moral conviction," that makes for good education without by that very fact offending against the consciences of some parents compelled, by law, to enroll their children?

Consensus or confusion?

We have extraordinary difficulty talking about these issues because of a long-established avoidance of the reality that we Americans differ profoundly in our beliefs. We tend to see beliefs as a matter of private concern alone. Most of the beliefs that people hold, however, include ways of seeing the world that have consequences for public life. The parents on whose behalf the Tennessee and Alabama cases were brought are unwilling to accept that their own beliefs are irrelevant to the education of their children.

At one time the beliefs of Americans and the traditions and associations in which these found expression seemed like so many sets of roots of a single hedge, a shared and unquestioned moral consensus. The existence in America of what could awkwardly be called "world-view minorities" has rarely elicited an adequate response in public policy—or even in public debate. The fact that most such groups have been immigrants has made it easy to dismiss their different perspectives and mores as a temporary condition that would eventually be "Americanized" away. The consensus underlying this confidence has been lost, and the current textbook cases reveal how far apart we are as a people.

Pollster and social commentator Daniel Yankelovich suggests, in his 1981 book *New Rules*, that one American in five holds to strongly

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traditional convictions about family, religious faith, work, and self-denial, while an equal number live by the humanistic psychology of "self-actualization," rejecting transcendent morality, family responsibility, and socially defined sexual mores. The others—three out of five of us—drift between the two poles on specific issues. American society will as a result be "a cockpit of conflict" for the rest of this century.

Confirmation of this breakdown of moral consensus emerges from a 1981 report commissioned by the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company, *The Impact of Belief*. The authors estimated the number among us of the "highly religious" as one in four, and found that they were "distinctly more likely than the least religious to vote in local elections (77 percent versus 49 percent)," and to be otherwise active in community life. "It is the intensely religious who may well be the most vocal group in the eighties, just as it was the disenchanted who were the most vocal in the sixties and the seventies." Their activism would be focused on moral issues, since

> our analysis shows surprisingly few sharp divisions on political issues which have traditionally evoked heated controversy . . . The controversial issues of today, our data reveal, are *moral* issues. It is these issues which most clearly divide liberals and conservatives; young and old; rich and poor; Black and White; those in cities and in rural areas; and those living in different regions of the United States.

The study surveyed approximately 1,800 leaders in nine major occupations and found them—especially those in law, education, and the media—consistently more "liberal" on moral issues than the general public. "Because leaders are among the less religious Americans," the authors conclude, "the study observes that they may be out of touch with the current of faith which appears to be gathering strength among the public in this decade."

Whether we welcome a new freedom of "lifestyles" or deplore the depravity of our neighbors, we should have no illusion that Americans continue to enjoy a consensus about the moral implications to be drawn from their diverse beliefs. The fact that the Reagan administration has not translated its mandate into a credible program of social reconstruction should not lead us to conclude that the passions that produced its majorities have subsided; they continue to burn at the local level, as the litigation in Tennessee and Alabama demonstrate.

Most commentators see these cases as a matter of "book-burning" or "censorship," or a powerful attempt to chase controversial ideas out of the public school curriculum. This is a radical misunderstanding of the real balance of power and the actual objectives of

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the parents in the Tennessee case. The term "censorship" is properly applied to the use of government or institutional power to exclude materials; the parents in Hawkins County appealed against government's refusal to accommodate their religious convictions by allowing alternative materials, *more* ideas and points of view in the curriculum, rather than fewer. All the power of government was on the side of excluding these materials. As the attorney for the parents observed during the trial, "If we win, there will be more books, not fewer. It's *Scopes* in reverse."

In the Alabama case the court has ordered the removal of forty-four textbooks from public schools (the order was temporarily stayed by the court of appeals), on the basis of precedent that an "establishment of religion" violation cannot be corrected by allowing those who object to be excused. Chairman John Buchanan of PAW described this as "government censorship of the school curriculum."

Richard Baer, a Cornell professor who was an expert witness for the plaintiff parents, points out that government selected the curriculum in the first place. "Public schools are no genuine marketplace of ideas," he has written, "but are instead a state monopoly with a captive student clientele." Thus the true censorship is that exercised with overwhelming power by state and local education officials "in including and excluding ideas and values from the curriculum, deciding what subject matter will and will not be taught, and determining educational goals and processes." The goal of the parents in the Alabama case, Baer says, is not to exclude ideas but to insist upon evenhandedness, that the state should not give a privileged position to the ideas and values of secular humanism.

In short, the Alabama case in particular raises basic questions about the purpose of public education, and the rights of individuals under a system of mandatory schooling.

The educators' "mission"

Controversies over the "religious" content of public schooling make no sense apart from an understanding of the distinction between *instruction* and *education*, a distinction stressed at least since Plato. Instruction seeks to develop a specific competence or a grasp of information, while education is always concerned with the development of a person, a citizen or a believer or a member of the clan. The development of beliefs and values, of loyalties and pictures of reality, is central to true education.

Public schooling in the United States has always stressed education as its primary aim. Horace Mann, in urging the "common school"

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as the supreme measure of social reform, lamented that "education has never yet been brought to bear with one hundredth part of its potential force upon the natures of children and, through them, upon the character of men, and of the race," and proclaimed his faith that "if all the children in the community, from the age of four years to that of sixteen, could be brought within the reformatory and elevating influences of good schools, the dark host of private vices and public crimes which now embitter domestic peace and stain the civilization of the age might, in ninety-nine cases in every hundred, be banished from the world."

In order to accomplish this high end, American public educators have always insisted that the particular convictions of religious denominations must be left at the schoolhouse door. Mann held it "to be one of the excellencies, of the moral beauties of the Massachusetts system, that there is one place in the land where the children of all the different denominations are brought together for instruction, where the Bible is allowed to speak for itself." Let common schools teach those religious beliefs on which there was no disagreement, and the moral guidelines accepted in common by all, and they would "turn the mind towards that which produces harmony, while they withdraw it from sources of discord; and thus, through the medium of our schools, that song which ushered in the Christian era—'Peace on earth and good-will to men'—may be taken up and continued through the ages."

There is thus a special irony that the common school has been the cause of some of our most bitter civic strife. Millions of Americans, objecting to the values and convictions taught in public schools, have insisted upon educating their children elsewhere. Horace Mann himself was in continual controversy with the spiritual ancestors of today's evangelicals. No democracy that has attempted to implement a state-controlled "common school" has escaped such controversy. Dutch political life was shaped for eighty years by struggle over religion and schooling, while the demonstrations by millions of French parents in 1981 against the threatened assimilation of private schools into the state system was only the latest episode in a controversy that has gone on for two centuries.

The goal of school reformers (as contrasted with social reformers who seek to use schools) has always been to assure that the school is coherent so as to be effective in its educational mission. The school as a community of teachers and learners should have—and here the latest research on "effective schools" confirms the instincts of educators in all ages—a clear sense of its educational mission. Schooling

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carries with it an informal "hidden curriculum" of messages that may conflict with and confound the formal teaching unless care is taken to achieve consistency. Students should not be confused by conflicting messages about what is expected of them and how to make sense of the world, though they should be made aware of the diversity of beliefs that characterizes modern life.

All this is to say that real education is always based upon a set of assumptions—whether explicit or implicit—about the meaning of life, of the maturity toward which the school seeks to lead each student. If these assumptions are shared by all of those doing the teaching, the student learns to understand the world, the purpose of life, and the norms that should govern it from a distinctive perspective. If they are not shared, the student will still learn something about life, that there are no definitive norms or purposes deserving allegiance, no fixed stars to navigate by.

Schools with a clearly defined set of purposes and assumptions are inevitably offensive to parents whose own convictions differ. Schools without such clarity, on the other hand, are unsatisfactory to every parent who has given the matter any thought.

The perennial dilemma of public education in America and other western democracies has been to persuade parents to enroll their children in common schools that are intended to create common values and loyalties. Shared values—the "virtue necessary to republics"—have always been deemed essential to a political order based upon the consent of the governed.

The democracies, with rare exceptions, have recognized the right of parents to enroll their children in schools other than those operated by government; this right was judicially established in the United States by the Supreme Court's ruling, in *Pierce* v. *Society of Sisters* (1925), that "the child is not the mere creature of the state; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations." To overcome the inclination of some parents to chose nonpublic schools, public educators continually remove objectionable elements of the curriculum. The more they do so, the more "value-neutral" and incoherent schools become, and the less they are fully satisfactory to any group of parents. Such "lowest-common-denominator" schools are perceived as ineffective in carrying out their mission of education in character and virtue.

Diversity vs. homogeneity

The underlying issue is not *whether* schools should teach values and a world-view, but *whose* values and world-view they should

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teach. In the United States—unlike in France and other nations with a strong state role in determining the convictions and loyalties to be developed by public schools—our answer has been, "the community," the local majority, presumably reflecting the desires of parents.

This may be a fine solution in a homogeneous community, though even there it creates problems for minorities with sufficiently distinctive views. The landmark Supreme Court ruling, during World War II, that children could not be required to pledge allegiance to the flag if their Jehovah's Witness parents objected on grounds of conscience, established that such convictions must be respected. "If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation," the Court held, "it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion . . ." (*West Virgina State Board of Education* v. *Barnette*, 1943).

It is in the tradition of this ruling that a group of Fundamentalist parents in Hawkins County, Tennessee, challenged the requirement that their children use textbooks that reflect world-views offensive to their beliefs. They have won the first round of the battle, and their children will be excused from lessons that the parents find offensive.

Minorities with views sharply in conflict with those of the majority can be accommodated in this manner. They renounce, in effect, any claim to influence the school's overall program in exchange for exemption from its objectionable aspects. Thus the ruling in Tennessee stands in the tradition of the *Barnette* case, allowing the children of Jehovah's Witnesses to refrain from saluting the flag, and of the *Yoder* case, allowing Amish parents to withdraw their children from school after the eighth grade. This is consistent with the world-shunning posture characteristic of Protestant Fundamentalists.

Evangelicals, though resembling Fundamentalists in beliefs, have a very different posture in relation to the prevailing culture. They interpret themselves as yeast in the society, with a culture-transforming role. While the Tennessee plaintiffs are Fundamentalists, those in Alabama can better be described as Evangelicals. Rather than seeking that their children be exempted from objectionable aspects of the curriculum, these plaintiffs—teachers as well as parents and students—are calling for basic changes in the curriculum itself.

In terms of First Amendment law, the Fundamentalists in Tennessee are seeking the "free exercise" of their religion within the public school, while the Evangelicals in Alabama are challenging the entire curriculum of public schools as an "establishment of religion" hostile to their beliefs.

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From the point of view of a public educator, the first claim would be relatively easy to accommodate with some administrative flexibility, while the second has the potential for creating a genuine crisis. This is not to say that it is necessarily to be deplored, only that it forces us to ask deeper questions about the goals of schools and their relation to a pluralistic society than we are accustomed to ask.

These parents are by no means alone; it is clear that millions of Americans share their objections. We have seen the results of this growing concern and repudiation of the education that we offer in public schools not only in litigation but also in the quieter but more significant withdrawal of hundreds of thousands of children from public schools to private schools or home-schooling. Between 1970 and 1985 the enrollment in private schools in kindergarten through eighth grade rose by 6 percent while equivalent public school enrollments were falling by 17 percent.

Hawkins County on trial

What happened in Hawkins County? A group of parents raised objections, in the fall of 1983, to elements of the curriculum used in grades K-VIII, elements that offended what the school board would concede were their sincerely held religious beliefs. The principal of the middle school attended by seven children from these families made alternative reading arrangements, and two more children were provided alternative arrangements at two other elementary schools. The principal of a third elementary school refused to allow use of an alternative text.

In November the school board voted unanimously to allow the use only of textbooks that they had approved (the alternative materials had been approved by the state but not locally), and school officials told the parents that other readers would no longer be permitted. "At that point," to quote Judge Hull, "these students refused, on religious grounds, to read the Holt series or to attend the reading classes in which the Holt series was used. They were suspended for three days as a result. On November 22, 1983, they were again suspended, this time for ten (10) days. . . . Following this rigorous enforcement of the Board's mandate, many of the student-plaintiffs withdrew from public schools and enrolled in private, Christian schools."

The basic objection of the parents, their attorney Michael Farris told reporters, was not to one item or to a few, but to books that "were systematically violating these peoples' beliefs." Among the

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examples cited by the parents was a book that depicted a boy making toast while a girl read a book. The parents charged that this was a deliberate reversal of traditional sex roles. The national media reacted to such examples only with open bewilderment. The parents' concern was never considered in their accounts of the story.

A little reflection will show that their concern is not as unreasonable as it has been made to appear in the media. Such images are one of the results of the efforts that many of us in public education have made over the past fifteen years to assure that curriculum and materials do not simply reinforce sex-role stereotypes. In response to these efforts (which included, in my case, issuing instructions to every public school in Massachusetts to review all current and proposed materials for "gender fairness") publishers enriched their books with women in a variety of occupations. Why did we invest so much energy in reviewing and modifying curriculum materials unless out of a conviction—shared by these parents in Tennessee—that, as Judge Hull noted, "there is no question that the reading texts teach more than just how to read."

But what if this has been carried so far that there are now *no* depictions of women who are full-time homemakers, as though that were no longer a worthy occupation? Surely that would be a stereotype and a distortion of another kind, and one deeply offensive to those women, whether conservative Christians or not, who choose to devote some years to the full-time care of their children.

Judge Hull concluded that there was a lack of balance in the curriculum, a "tilt" against the religious convictions of the plaintiff parents.

> It appears to the Court that many of the objectionable passages in the Holt books would be rendered inoffensive, or less offensive, in a more balanced context. The problem with the Holt series, as it relates to the plaintiffs beliefs, is one of degree. One story reinforces and builds upon the others throughout the individual texts and the series as a whole. The plaintiffs believe that, after reading the entire Holt series, a child might adopt the views of a feminist, a humanist, a pacifist, an anti-Christian, a vegetarian, or an advocate of "one-world government.". . . Plaintiffs sincerely believe that the repetitive affirmation of these philosophical viewpoints is repulsive to the Christian faith—so repulsive that they must not allow their children to be exposed to the Holt series. This is their religious belief, "and it is not for us to say that the line [they] drew was an unreasonable one."

The expulsion of children from school because, on the instruction of their parents, they would not use the prescribed readers, was, he found, a violation of their right to a free public education on the basis of their religious beliefs.

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Attorney Michael Farris pointed out to the media that this ruling was not "a recipe for disaster for nonsectarian public education" (as charged by Anthony Podesta) but was rather "a recipe for individualized treatment in public schools." Farris noted that reading groups—often using different materials—and individualized instruction are already commonplace in American schools. "If a child needs some special treatment because of religion," he said, "we think that's the way it should work in this country."

In testimony cited by Judge Hull in his ruling, a Hawkins County elementary teacher reported that she had always used additional texts and materials in order to individualize instruction as much as possible.

"The Court must decide," Judge Hull noted, "whether the state can achieve literacy and good citizenship for all students without forcing them to read the Holt series. It seems obvious that this question must be answered in the affirmative. . . . the fact that the state has approved several basic reading series for use in the Tennessee public schools tells us something of the expendability of any particular series."

The Tennessee case, then, raised a relatively straightforward question of whether the common public school can and should accommodate the sincerely held conviction of some parents that portions of the curriculum violate their beliefs. For Timothy Dyk, the attorney assigned by People for the American Way to defend the Tennessee school officials, the remedy sought by the parents was illusory, since "we can't comply with their beliefs and teach them at all. The only place for them is to be taught at home or to go to religious schools."

This essentially illiberal position—that rights of conscience must be "purchased" by the abandonment of a claim to free public schooling—is difficult to sustain in light of *Barnette* and other First Amendment rulings, and of our tradition of respect for the beliefs by which people live. The Hawkins County case seems to fall well within the tradition of accommodation of such beliefs. The case unfolding in Alabama, by contrast, goes to the roots of our common school tradition.

Activism in Alabama

The background of the Alabama case includes several ironical twists. The case was brought originally by a black legal services attorney, Ishmael Jaffree, on behalf of his own children, charging that the Alabama law authorizing a moment of silent prayer represented an "establishment of religion" and was teaching them to

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pray against his wishes. The Mobile County School Board noted, in a filing with the Supreme Court, that Jaffree had made on-going efforts "to silence speech of many types if possible," including the pledge of allegiance and the national anthem. In the case of the "moment of silence," he was successful on appeal, after Federal District Judge Brevard Hand ruled against him in 1983.

The judge did not acquiesce in the reversal of his ruling by the Supreme Court, but "realigned" a group of parents who had intervened in defense of the State of Alabama and of silent prayer as plaintiffs in a second stage of the case. In this stage, he said, he would accept testimony on whether other aspects of the school program constitute an establishment of the religion of Secular Humanism; indeed, he made it clear that he was already convinced of as much. At this point another group of parents took the place of the first group, now become plaintiffs, in defending the State of Alabama. Both groups relied upon outside assistance, the first group from the National Legal Foundation, the second from the American Civil Liberties Union and People for the American Way.

In brief, the first stage of this litigation asked that elements of explicit Christianity be permitted in Alabama public schools, and called into question previous rulings of the Supreme Court to the contrary. That approach having failed, the continuing inclusion of another belief-system, "Secular Humanism," was challenged. "If our beliefs can't find a place in the school," the plaintiffs said, in effect, "then we will insist that your beliefs be excluded as well!" They are seeking equal application of the Supreme Court's rulings.

It is a peculiarity of educational policymaking in the United States that such challenges are not generally resolved in the political arena, by negotiation and accommodation on the basis of compromise, but must be cast in the categories of First Amendment interpretation for resolution (ultimately) by the Supreme Court. One of the effects is to raise the stakes dramatically; a decision on the basis of the Constitution has the potential of overturning long-established arrangements that would merely bend a little to achieve an accommodation. While no American institution seems more solidly based than public education, the radical changes brought about by the rulings on racial segregation and on abortion should warn public educators against complacency in the face of the challenge posed by the plaintiffs in Alabama.

It may unfortunately be necessary that the issues be dealt with in this way, because of the precedent of past court rulings that appear (at least to instinctively timid educators) to block accommodations

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of conviction. Local and state policymaking is extraordinarily limited and defensive in this area because of the chilling effect of judicial precedent.

Much of the case made on the two sides, then, turns upon points of constitutional precedent that would not arise in a more straightforward discussion of the wisdom of particular policies.

It was central to the plaintiffs' case to establish that certain elements of the curriculum—if not the whole—represent an "establishment of religion" just as surely as do Bible-reading or periods of silent prayer. The boldness of this frontal attack gives the case its particular resonance; the plaintiffs were able to obtain judicial relief "barring the further advancement of the tenets of the religion of secular humanism" in the Alabama public schools.

The freedom of belief guaranteed by the Constitution and by popular consensus rests upon another freedom, the plaintiffs argued, that of the *formation of those beliefs*. They cited in support of this position a 1980 law review article. Authors Stephan Arons and Charles Lawrence contend that

> If the government were to regulate the development of ideas and opinions . . . freedom of expression would become a meaningless right. . . . [T]he development as well as the expression of those beliefs, opinions, world views and aspects of conscience that constitute individual consciousness should be free from government manipulation.

This line of argument (spelled out more fully in Arons's book, *Compelling Belief*) calls into question the mission of the "common school" as articulated by Horace Mann and others, for whom the development of common ideas and opinions was the highest calling of public education. It draws support from several Supreme Court rulings restricting the power of public education to foster "a homogeneous people with American ideals" (*Meyer* v. *Nebraska*, 1923), "to standardize its children" (*Pierce* v. *Society of Sisters*, 1925), or to achieve an "officially disciplined uniformity" (*West Virginia* v. *Barnette*, 1943).

But do public schools attempt to prescribe any orthodoxy? Wouldn't it be more accurate to describe them—as does Secretary of Education William Bennett—as a wasteland in which a "pervasive and almost pathological aversion to controversy" has led to avoidance of value-laden statements about anything?

The Alabama case depended upon demonstrating that public schools are not neutral, either in the positive sense intended by Horace Mann or in the negative sense deplored by Bennett. The plaintiffs argued, and the court found, that schools continue in fact to be religious, and that the religion they express is that of Secular

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Humanism. They rely upon the Supreme Court's ruling, in *United States* v. *Seeger* (1965), that the test of whether a conviction is religious is not belief in a Supreme Being but "whether a given belief that is sincere and meaningful occupies a place in the life of its possessor parallel to that filled by the orthodox belief in God. . . ."

The challenge to secular humanism

The Humanism represented by the Humanist Manifesto I (1933) and II (1973) is a coherent "religious belief system," found Judge Brevard Hand in Alabama "entitled to the protections of, and subject to the prohibitions of, the religion clauses [of the First Amendment]. It is not a mere scientific methodology that may be promoted and advanced in the public schools." Its adherents have not hesitated to refer to it as religious or as equivalent to religion. Secular Humanism —a phrase coined by its proponents, not by the Moral Majority— has many of the organizational characteristics of a church. "These organizations proselytize and preach their theories with the avowed purpose of persuading nonadherents to believe as they do." They must not be allowed to do so through the public schools: "The promotion and advancement of a religious system occurs when one faith-theory is taught to the exclusion of others, and this is prohibited by the First Amendment religion clauses."

While the religious character of Humanism is not difficult to demonstrate on the basis of its organizational characteristics and its function in the lives of adherents, it is more difficult to show that an educational system staffed in large part by Baptists, Roman Catholics, and other assorted theists represents an "establishment" of Secular Humanism. While in the Netherlands optional "Humanist formation" is provided in public schools alongside Catholic and Protestant religious instruction, American public education does not make explicit provision for instruction in "world-views."

The plaintiffs sought to get around this difficulty by arguing that the message conveyed by public education is significantly parallel to that taught by Secular Humanism; the defendant/intervenors retorted (though without offering proof) that there are many parallels with the message of Christianity as well. The position of the plaintiffs, they charged, blurs "the distinction between humanism and Secular Humanism. . . . As a result, they can quite literally take any proposition with which they disagree and put a 'humanist' label on it."

The plaintiffs demonstrated, by expert testimony from Paul Vitz and historian Timothy Smith, that the role of Christianity and Judaism in American life and history is significantly ignored in public

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school textbooks. Judge Hand ruled that "omissions, if sufficient, do affect a person's ability to develop religious beliefs and exercise that religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitution. . . . Religion, where treated at all, is generally represented as a private matter, only influencing American public life at some extraordinary moments. This view of religion is one humanists have been seeking to instill for 50 years."

Vitz is a professor of psychology at New York University and author of a comprehensive study on public school textbooks. The study has caused controversy in Washington because of its sponsorship by the National Institute of Education, but it is in fact in a tradition of research on "bias in textbooks." Such research in the past has considered whether the contributions of black and Hispanic Americans, or of women, are adequately represented in the school curriculum. The possibility that religion—like race, ethnicity, and gender—may be avoided by textbooks has been explored recently in studies sponsored by two groups that support "strict neutrality" in public schools, Americans United for Separation of Church and State and People for the American Way. Both reach conclusions that support Vitz's findings.

Vitz reviewed in detail the social studies texts produced by ten major publishers for grades one through six, the basal readers produced by eleven publishers for grades three and six, and the United States History texts produced by ten publishers for high schools. He showed that his selection was a fair representation of the textbooks in these areas currently in use in American public schools.

Briefly stated, Vitz found an almost incredible degree of neglect of the role of religion in American history for the past century and more, and in contemporary life, with a particular aversion to Protestantism other than in its "quaint" Amish form; he comments that "those responsible for these books appear to have a deep-seated fear of any form of active contemporary Christianity, especially serious, committed Protestantism."

Vitz also noted a distorted presentation of family life that lays no stress upon the commitment of marriage as the norm or upon the vocation of full-time parenting. Patriotism, he finds, played a role in only five out of 670 stories and articles in basal readers, and in no case was the setting later than 1780. There is a similar neglect of business, of labor, and of altruism. Prominent contemporary political figures profiled in social studies texts are almost exclusively "liberal." In brief, he found a pattern of censorship by the publishers and purchasers of textbooks far more pervasive than that threatened by groups of parents.

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One weakness in this line of argument regarding silence about religion, however, is that Secular Humanists are anything but indifferent to theistic religion; many are obsessed by what they perceive as its threat to their highest concerns. The fact that a high proportion of the actual references to religion in the textbooks have to do with the struggle for religious liberty (and thus with freedom from established orthodoxies) might in fact be a better argument for Humanist influence than is the ignoring of other aspects of religion.

Is there any part of the curriculum in which the inculcation of Humanism as a belief-system can actually be demonstrated? The plaintiffs made their best case with five home economics textbooks used in Alabama and elsewhere nationwide, relying upon expert testimony by Richard Baer, a professor of ethics, Kenneth Strike, a professor of the philosophy of education, and W. R. Coulson, a professor of psychology and education.

The reviewers described a persistent bias in these textbooks against theistic religion and traditional moral values. Such concepts central to Judaism and Christianity as "love, responsibility, justice, sin, guilt, forgiveness, faithfulness, redemption, righteousness, obedience, peace, joy and reconciliation" are ignored by the Home Economics texts, they found. In place of these virtues students are taught concepts out of humanistic psychology such as "growth," "independence from adults," "satisfaction in life," "self-acceptance," being "a unique person," and that "values are personal and subjective."

As Kenneth Strike observed in testimony prepared for the court:

> These books not only present the view that students should have a free choice concerning their values, but they also have a unique and distinctive view as to what counts as free choice. They give the impression that certain kinds of influences on people are not reasonable bases for genuinely free choice. If, for example, a value can be traced to home, church, community or peers, it is seen as not yet the result of a choice of the student and for this reason is treated as suspect. Values should be one's own.

Values that are not personal, in this line of thinking, are arbitrary and illegitimate. The textbooks make a false analogy between tastes or preferences—which are truly idiosyncratic—and moral principles. Self-interest, in the narrowest sense, is presented as the basis for all decisions: if we refrain from stealing, it is lest we be caught; if we choose to be religious, it is for the sake of the "psychological security" religion can provide.

Parental prerogative

The plaintiffs sought to prove that these textbooks represent a comprehensive view of the world and of morality that functions like

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a religion and thus competes directly with Christianity and Judaism. This comprehensive view, so their argument went, is that of Secular Humanism and humanistic psychology. The court agreed, ruling that

> teaching that moral choices are purely personal and can only be based on some autonomous, as yet undiscovered and unfulfilled, inner self is a sweeping fundamental belief that must not be promoted by the public schools. . . . With these books, the State of Alabama has overstepped its mark, and must withdraw to perform its proper non-religious functions.

For millions of religious parents and indeed for many thoughtful persons with no religious beliefs, the attitude and values underlying such textbooks are deplorable and profoundly offensive. Indeed, Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles, though selected as a witness by the defendants, stated in a deposition that the values reflected in the textbooks were "lamentable" and "pitiable."

But does the use of such textbooks thereby constitute a violation of the First Amendment? Plaintiffs argue that the fact that home economics is not a mandatory part of the curriculum does not weaken their case; after all, even a minute a day of silence for prayer, with the opportunity for those objecting to absent themselves, has been found to constitute "establishment of religion." College-bound students do not generally take home economics courses; it is the students least likely to ask critical questions, the plaintiffs point out, who are most likely to be exposed to these one-sided ideas.

The need to argue the question in that way, to show the "religious" nature of a watered-down version of the "human potential movement," reveals the shallowness of our debates over educational policy and our reliance upon the courts to handle all the difficult questions. The federal Constitution and Bill of Rights leave education entirely up to the states, and the Supreme Court has noted that public education officials should have the wisdom to deal with the unavoidably religious content of schooling without continual judicial intervention.

Evangelicals and Humanists in Alabama are engaged in a struggle of which the outcome may well be a further purging from public education of those qualities about which both are deeply concerned. Such litigation could lead to an ever more obsessive avoidance of materials, ideals, examples, convictions that contribute to the development of character and civic virtue, as well as of the "pop psychology" found in the home economics books. This is not to say, however, that the evangelicals are to be condemned for bringing their suit; in fairness we must acknowlege that they are responding to substantial provocations over the past thirty years, in a series of

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cases brought by their opponents. The Alabama case indicates that the secularists will not have it all their own way in the future. Such give-and-take, we are often told, is how the American legal system works.

Educators, on the other hand, may feel like a civilian population over whose territory hostile armies campaign. They may cheer one side or the other, but ultimately they must live with devastation. A continual purging from the curriculum of elements that give meaning and direction to human life, and thus are "religious," cannot be good for schools. Public education threatens to become a barren waste as a result of the strategy of "mutual assured destruction" employed by evangelicals and strict separationists alike.

Let us stipulate that there are many parents for whom the home economics curriculum, as described by Kenneth Strike, reflects precisely their own values and those they wish communicated to their children. Daniel Yankelovich writes of one American in five who lives by the humanistic psychology of "self-actualization." Should they not be able to see their values reflected in the public schooling of their children? But, by the same token, should parents with traditional religious and moral values not have the same right?

Compulsion or compromise?

Unfortunately, we have set ourselves an impossible task in seeking to provide a single model of education that is to be at once capable of nurturing character and civic virtue and yet inoffensive to the convictions of any parent. We might congratulate ourselves—as did the attorney for the Hawkins County School Board—on the fact that parents who object can always have recourse to private schools, but this is tantamount to making the exercise of conscience and of parental rights contingent upon the ability to afford a private education. Surely that is unfair!

Can we not agree, as a matter of education policy, that parents should not be forced to betray their convictions and their sense of what they owe to their children for the sake of obtaining a free and adequate public education? And can we not also agree that the education of no child is served by continuing to remove every ounce of juice and flavor in the curriculum, for fear of something that might offend?

The only solution, it seems to me, is to allow parents to place their children in schools that correspond to their own convictions, while meeting the common requirements of the society: schools with the cohesiveness to develop character and civic virtue, as well

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as to be educationally effective. Is our national unity really so fragile that it depends upon the indoctrination of the young? If so, we do well to be concerned, for an increasing number of parents are withdrawing their children from our public schools. As the Supreme Court pointed out with respect to the compulsory flag salute, for schools to insist upon teaching a single orthodoxy "is to make an unflattering estimate of the appeal of our institutions to free minds."

The "common school," rightly understood, is not really at stake in Tennessee and Alabama. The exposure of all future citizens to the essential elements of the American heritage can be assured without either the petty tyranny of Hawkins County or the mindless feel-good home economics curriculum used in Alabama. It may be more to the point, as Judge Hull suggested, to give students an example of respect for individual beliefs and for religious freedom by "an accommodation [that] might promote a spirit of religious tolerance in the school system."

Any solution would have to move our schools in two seemingly contradictory—but actually complementary—directions at once.

Public education could respond to the new textbook litigation by seeking to make the curriculum more fair to the convictions of millions of American parents who are religiously conservative, in a way that adds rather than subtracts, that makes the curriculum more flavorful rather than more bland. We could implement a more truly comprehensive curriculum, with solid content drawn from our cultural heritage, a curriculum that does justice to those dimensions of the American and the human experience currently neglected in textbooks.

As a long-time state education official, I have seen public schools go through tremendous changes over the past fifteen years in how race and ethnicity and gender are presented and discussed. Most of these changes have been for the better. They occurred because teachers and administrators and school board members became convinced that they were right, and textbook publishers scrambled to catch up. All that stands in the way of similarly dealing with religion and traditional values in the classroom is the conviction that such values are an important part of a sound education.

Another movement would be toward more true diversity in public education, toward organizational structures not dependent upon uniformity, toward curricula with many different approaches to what every student should learn. This development, like the first, would actually strengthen the ability of public education to carry out its mission. Flexibility of approach and parent choice among

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valid educational options are given strong support in the National Governors' Association's recent report, *Time for Results*, and we are vigorously encouraging them in a number of Massachusetts cities.

So long as we are clear about the outcomes that we seek, the essential elements of an education for life in our society and political order, we can explore a thousand ways to reach that goal. Why fight with parents over whether their children will read a particular story, if there is another more acceptable that will achieve the same result? The number of specific texts that are truly essential to carrying out the mission of public education is surely very limited: the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, the Gettysburg Address, a handful of others. We have no business making a free public education dependent, as it was in Hawkins County, upon a willingness to have one's children read the *Wizard of Oz*!

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Scoring the economic forecasters

CHARLES WOLF, JR.

ECONOMIC FORECASTING has something in common with earthquake prediction and medical diagnostics. The phenomena are complex and imperfectly understood. The stakes are high. Enormous data sets have been collected, although questions frequently arise about their reliability.

Also, in all three instances, the explanatory theory that exists is inexact and fluid. (The imprecision of earthquake prediction theory was evident in the strikingly different interpretations placed upon the series of sharp temblors in Southern California in July 1986. According to the mutually inconsistent predictions inferred from these events, a major earthquake is: (a) more likely to occur in the near term because the recent temblors were an indicator of what's in store; (b) less likely because the previously existing tectonic stresses have now been relieved; and (c) neither more nor less likely than before because nothing fundamental was changed by the 1986 quakes!)

The three domains are also alike in that their respective practitioners often argue that any particular case immediately at hand —for example, the economy's behavior next year or last year, or the prognosis for a particular patient, or the outlook for earthquakes in California in the next year or ten—is unique, "a class of one," and

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hence no generalization or prediction can be made without so many qualifications as to depreciate its meaning.

Finally, the three are alike in that no systematic method exists for regularly tracking practitioners in the way that, say, major league batters or pitchers can be tracked from year to year. Hence, in the absence of either a metric or an institutional memory, users are unable to distinguish the more accurate forecasters from those who are less so. In the apt words of Charles Morris, "the rules for modern forecasting are to do it cheekily and frequently, to insist on the solidity of each new forecast and to count on the general lack of interest in the subject to obscure yesterday's bumblings."

Something would surely be gained by having a standard scoring system to distinguish the heavy hitters from the whiffers. Such a scorecard would help to inform the unwary public about the best and the worst, as well as about how bad even the best are. It would also tend, over time, to improve forecasting. As Samuel Johnson once observed, "When a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully." So, too, would the prospect of having one's forecasting score publicized. Over several years, the market would assure that the better forecasters survive and that the others would find another line of work.

Putting the forecasters in the batter's box

To accomplish these aims, a fairly straightforward, intuitively plausible method has been devised. The method, which I have called the *Economic Forecast Scoring System* (EFSS), expresses the absolute difference between forecast and outcome as a percentage of the actual outcome: The larger the percentage, the bigger the forecast error. Thus, a perfectly accurate forecast would have a zero score, while a score of 1 would imply the forecast erred by one hundred percent. The latter might be construed as equivalent to a "strike-out" for a baseball batter, although theoretically EFSS allows practitioners to err by even larger percentages. (Actually, strike-outs occur very rarely in the component forecasts discussed and scored below. For example, only in such cases as the inflation-rate forecasts made in 1983 and 1986, when the *average* forecast errors were nearly 100 percent, and some individual forecasters exceeded the average by a wide margin.)

In EFSS, only the *absolute* difference between forecast and outcome matters in calculating the percentage error: Whether the forecast is above or below the outcome doesn't affect the score. Thus, a forecast of the real GNP growth rate that diverges from the actual

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year-over-year growth by a given amount scores equally under EFSS, regardless of whether the forecast exceeds or falls short of the realized growth.

Of course, other scoring rules, with somewhat different merits and demerits, might be devised. For example, the scores could be based on the absolute errors alone, rather than the percentage of the outcome represented by these errors. Or the errors might be scaled according to the variability of the outcome, rather than its level. EFSS uses percentage error as a scoring metric because it is salient and easily understood, rather than because it is unexceptionable.

For EFSS to be applied fairly, the forecasts must have been made at the same point in time prior to the outcome that is forecasted. It is also evident that comparison among the forecasters requires that their scores be tracked repeatedly, across several time periods.

Four economic indicators have been chosen for EFSS: real GNP growth on a year-over-year basis; average change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI); the three-month Treasury bill rate averaged over the year; and the rate of unemployment averaged over the year.

These four indicators were selected for two reasons: They are among the most significant macroeconomic guideposts for the economy as a whole; and yearly forecasts for these indicators are readily available on a comparable basis for most of the prominent forecasters, including those associated with the federal government. In principle, several additional indicators, which are no less important than the selected ones, would have been worthwhile to include —notably, the federal budget deficit, the trade or current-account deficit or surplus, the dollar's exchange rate, and the total level of employment (which is a much more accurate figure than the rate of unemployment). Unfortunately, these indicators are not covered on a comparable basis by most of the forecasters. Still other, more narrowly focused indicators (for example, before-tax and after-tax profits, industrial production, housing starts) that might be of particular interest to some forecast users are omitted from this initial scoring venture to keep it relatively simple.

The four indicators have been used in scoring fifteen of the best-known forecasters, including two from government—the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)—and thirteen from private firms: the Bank of America, Chase Econometrics, Data Resources, Dean Witter, Du Pont, Evans Economics, *Fortune*, Manufacturers Hanover, Merrill Lynch Economics, Morgan Guaranty, Pennzoil, Wharton Econometrics, and the Blue Chip Consensus Forecast.

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The scores cover forecasts for the four years 1983-1986. All of the forecasts, except for those of CBO, were made in January of the year under consideration. For example, the year-over-year GNP growth forecasts for 1983 were made in January 1983.* The CBO forecasts were made in February of each corresponding year. Outcome measures are taken from *Economic Indicators*, prepared for the Joint Economic Committee by the Council of Economic Advisers.

The 1983-1986 period included several dramatic changes in the external economic environment—the collapse of oil prices, and the extraordinarily high rise (1983-1985) and then sharp fall (1986) in the dollar's exhange value, which might have resulted in unusually large forecast errors in some of the selected indicators. However, all of the forecasters were subject to this same jeopardy. Consequently, while their collective performance as a group might be adversely affected, their *relative scores* would not be. To be sure, if a particular forecaster happened to be lucky in anticipating one of these discontinuities, its relative performance would be improved. But the resulting boost in performance would only be temporary. If, on the other hand, a particular forecaster is unusually and recurringly good at anticipating such apparent discontinuities, then skill is probably a better explanation than luck.

Moreover, it's not entirely clear that the 1983-86 period really did display a greater profusion of discontinuities than is normal. Consider the closing of the gold window and the imposition of price controls in 1971, or the quadrupling of oil prices in 1973-74 and their doubling again in 1979-80. Economic forecasting is just a difficult line of work in almost any time period!

How did they score?

Table I shows the annual EFSS scores (in parentheses) and the corresponding rankings for the fifteen forecasters for the four economic indicators (GNP growth, Consumer Price Index change, T-Bill rate, unemployment rate), for each of the four years from 1983 to 1986 (columns 1-4, respectively). Column 5 of the table shows the composite scores and the relative rankings of the 15 forecasters based on the unweighted sum of their annual EFSS scores over the period.

Interpretation of the annual EFSS scores is straightforward: For example, the Data Resources score of 1.335 in 1983 (column 1 of

* In the very few instances where one of the indicators was missing from a forecaster's predictions, the missing score was assumed to be equal to the average of the other forecasters' scores for that indicator in that year.

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Table I. Forecasters' Scores and Rankings, 1983–1986[a]

Forecaster	*1983 Rank Score (1)*	*1984 Rank Score (2)*	*1985 Rank Score (3)*	*1986 Rank Score (4)*	*Composite Rank & Score 1983–1986 Rank Score (5)*
Bank of America	14 (1.379)	12 (0.551)	5 (0.444)	8 (1.434)	10 (3.708)
Chase Econometrics	9 (1.199)	8 (0.502)	13 (0.696)	3 (1.006)	6 (3.403)
Data Resources	13 (1.335)	1 (0.350)	1 (0.143)	4 (1.070)	1 (2.898)
Dean Witter	2 (0.923)	13 (0.555)	15 (0.874)	12 (1.717)	12 (4.069)
DuPont	1 (0.918)	9 (0.515)	9 (0.608)	2 (0.999)	3 (3.040)
Evans Economics	15 (1.570)	7 (0.494)	3 (0.256)	14 (2.014)	13 (4.334)
Fortune	3 (0.960)	11 (0.541)	11 (0.646)	11 (1.595)	11 (3.742)
Manufacturers Hanover	11 (1.275)	5 (0.483)	2 (0.150)	10 (1.543)	7 (3.451)
Merrill Lynch	6 (1.117)	14 (0.557)	8 (0.602)	5 (1.210)	8 (3.486)
Morgan Guaranty	10 (1.213)	3 (0.401)	6 (0.466)	7 (1.249)	5 (3.329)
Pennzoil	8 (1.172)	10 (0.538)	14 (0.730)	13 (2.008)	14 (4.448)
Wharton	5 (1.098)	4 (0.408)	10 (0.625)	1 (0.799)	2 (2.930)
Blue Chip Consensus	4 (1.047)	6 (0.490)	7 (0.536)	9 (1.495)	9 (3.568)
OMB	12 (1.332)	15 (0.958)	12 (0.691)	15 (2.457)	15 (5.438)
CBO	7 (1.136)	2 (0.385)	4 (0.362)	6 (1.245)	4 (3.128)

[a] Columns (1)–(4) show EFSS scores in parentheses which represent the unweighted sum of the separate forecast errors expressed as percentages of actual GNP growth, CPI change, T-Bill rate, and unemployment rate in each of the four years, 1983–1986. If a forecaster did not publish a forecast for one of the indicators in a particular year, I assumed the missing observation was equal to the average of the remaining forecasts for that indicator in that year. T-Bill forecasts by the Bank of America were not originally published outside the bank and would not, in any event, have been appropriate to use because their probabilistic structure made them noncomparable to the other forecasts in the sample. The composite EFSS score in column (5) is the sum of the individual four-year scores. Scores and rankings in the table have been slightly revised from a similar table published in the *Wall Street Journal* on June 10, 1987 to correct for a reporting error in earlier data.

Table I) signifies that its forecasts in that year erred by a total of 133.5 percent spread over the four economic indicators included in the scoring system. The total score shown in the table doesn't indicate how the aggregate error was divided among the four indicators. (Actually, in the cited example, nearly all of the 133.5 percent resulted from errors in forecasting GNP growth and the CPI increase).

In adding the separate unweighted scores for the four economic indicators to arrive at each year's total EFSS score, I am implicitly assuming that each indicator is of equal importance, and also am making no allowance for possible differences in the difficulty of forecasting each indicator.

The assumption of equal weights among the four indicators is more transparent, even if no less arbitrary, than would be the assignment of differential weights (say, treating GNP growth as twice as important as each of the other indicators). Of course, an individual forecast user may be much more interested in one of the indicators than in the others. For example, a firm with typically large short-term borrowing requirements might be most interested in the Treasury bill rate, and therefore might wish to assign a heavier weight to this component in arriving at a total score.

The four indicators evidently differ in the degree of difficulty involved in forecasting them, although EFSS makes no allowance for this difference. If we use as a measure of forecasting difficulty the average error experienced by the fifteen forecasters as a group, it appears that the CPI change and GNP growth are the hardest to forecast, the T-Bill rate is next and the unemployment rate is the easiest of the four, as shown in Table II.

Table II. Average Forecast Errors for Component Indicators, 1983–1986[a]
(In percentage)

Year	*GNP Growth*	*CPI Change*	*T-Bill Rate*	*Unemployment*
1983	44.3	49.8	13.6	10.1
1984	19.4	14.3	10.0	7.8
1985	24.4	13.3	11.4	3.1
1986	25.3	98.6	19.3	2.4

[a] Percentages are the average errors realized by the fifteen forecasters included in the sample.

In part, the difference in forecast difficulty, as reflected by the average errors shown in Table II, is simply due to the greater year-to-year of volatility of GNP growth and CPI changes, and the greater year-to-year stability of the T-Bill and unemployment rates. But

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only in part. Actually, the CPI changes showed relatively less variability over the 1983-1986 period than the GNP growth rate, yet the fifteen forecasters had more trouble in forecasting the CPI than the GNP.

Although the different average errors suggest differences in the difficulty of forecasting the four indicators, it is worth noting that the fifteen forecasters display very considerable variation from these average errors in their individual forecasts. Thus, the deviations from the average errors shown in Table II are substantial among the fifteen forecasters, whether or not the average errors are large or small! The implication of this point is that the individual forecasters are much more "independent" of one another than might have been expected.

Forecasters, forecasting, and the wary consumer

As the EFSS results summarized in Table I plainly indicate, all of the forecasters are inaccurate some of the time, and some are inaccurate most of the time. The composite scores and rankings for the 1983-1986 period (shown in column 5 of Table I), suggest that the fifteen forecasters cluster in three groups, which are separated by discernible gaps or "knees" between them: a group of four relatively "heavy-hitters," including Data Resources, Wharton, DuPont, and CBO; a middle group, covering the fifth through the eleventh ranked forecasters, including Morgan, Chase, Manufacturers Hanover, Merrill Lynch, the Blue Chip Consensus, Bank of America, and *Fortune*; and a lower tier of the lightest hitters, including Evans, Dean Witter, Pennzoil, and OMB.

Notwithstanding these gradations, the relative standings of the forecasters vary widely from year to year. Dean Witter had the second most accurate forecast of the entire group in 1983, but was the least accurate in 1985. Evans was third from the top in 1985, but fourteenth in 1986. Data Resources was near the bottom in 1983, and at or near the top in 1984, 1985, and 1986. Among the heavy hitters, CBO is the most consistent. In general, a particular forecaster's standing in a particular year doesn't tell a lot about its relative performance in a subsequent year.

Considering the fifteen forecasters as a group, their relative rankings in 1983, as they appear in Table I, are not significantly correlated with those in 1984. Although the rank correlation between 1984 and 1985 is statistically significant, that between 1985 and 1986 is not. The degree of association (concordance) among the rankings over the four-year period as a whole is so small (.168), that one can-

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not reject the hypothesis that the separate four-year rankings among the forecasters are unrelated.

These results make explicitly and quantitatively clear what is impressionistically and qualitatively already well known: Macroeconomic forecasting is a hazardous, difficult, and imperfect art. There are better and worse performers according to the EFSS scores, but the best is none too good. GNP and CPI changes are evidently harder to forecast, as reflected by their average forecast errors, than the T-Bill rate and unemployment. Yet the variability around these average errors is substantial, suggesting that the forecasters practice their art more independently than might have been supposed. If they share a general proneness to err, they also display a proclivity to make their own individual errors.

It is reasonable to conclude that a lot of room remains for improvements in forecasting. But how much improvement can be made, and how quickly, is open to question, both because of the enormous and growing complexity of the economic system, and the changeability of the relationships within it.

Lest macroeconomic forecasts and forecasters be judged too hastily, it's worth noting that they appear in a much more favorable light when compared with forecasts in other fields that are concerned with much narrower and presumably simpler phenomena than the behavior of the economy as a whole. After all, it was only a few years ago that experts made forecasts of an impending teacher "surplus" and a doctor "shortage," whereas current conditions in both fields—at prevailing compensation rates—are now proclaimed to be exactly the opposite of the forecasts. And it is easy to forget that four or five years ago the consensus forecast of oil prices in the mid-1980s was more than twice the price levels that were actually reached.

In the domain of macroeconomic forecasting, *caveat emptor* is a warranted, if perhaps gratuitous, admonition. However, closer adherence to it can, with the help provided by EFSS, have at least two salutary effects: contributing to more flexible and effective business planning by increasing awareness of the real uncertainties that are involved in underlying macroeconomic assumptions; and, by the process of Darwinian selection, contributing to improving the practice of economic forecasting. The EFSS can also help to distinguish economic forecasting from earthquake prediction and medical diagnostics by providing consumers with means of calibrating practitioners in the field.

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Elder abuse: the latest "crisis"

STEPHEN CRYSTAL

IN 1979, the House Select Committee on Aging held hearings on abuse of the elderly by their families, which it titled, "The Hidden Problem." Several of the witnesses observed that while child abuse was "discovered" in the 1960s and spouse abuse in the 1970s, elder abuse would be discovered in the 1980s. They turned out to be largely correct. During the early 1980s, while few reliable data on the subject were generated, political and professional attention to elder abuse was substantial, with new legislation enacted in a majority of states.

In 1985, the Aging Committee's Subcommittee on Health and Long-Term Care, chaired by Rep. Claude Pepper, issued a follow-up report titled "A National Disgrace." Elder abuse was described as "a full-scale national problem which existed with a frequency few have dared to imagine possible. In fact, abuse of the elderly by their loved ones and caretakers existed with a frequency and rate only slightly less than child abuse. There was no question that the problem was increasing dramatically from year to year." The subcommittee's report asserted that 4 percent of the elderly—one million older Americans!—are victims of such abuse each year, and found that: "The horrifying conclusion was that elder abuse . . . was everywhere. The obvious question was what could the federal government do to provide safety to seniors in their own homes."

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Proposed answers to this question have drawn heavily from the field of child abuse. By the late 1970s, encouraged in large part by financial incentives incorporated in the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, state laws mandating reporting of child abuse that has come to the attention of professionals or others to state social service authorities became virtually universal. These statutes and increased public sensitivity to the issue brought child abuse cases "out of the closet," with sharp increases in the volume of child abuse reports and the concomitant investigations. Some professionals, however, have recently begun to note a downside to the decreased threshold for investigation and intervention in this area of family life, with the accompanying propensity to call in the authorities where there is any suspicion of child abuse. In addition to the direct costs of child protective programs and foster care placements resulting from such intervention—now exceeding $3.5 billion per year—some professionals worry that increasing numbers of unfounded reports are overwhelming their capacity to respond to truly abusive situations. Douglas Besharov, former director of the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect, reported in 1986 that while the number of children reported to the authorities as being abused or neglected increased dramatically since the mid-1970s—to more than 1.5 million in 1984—the proportion of reports found to be substantiated declined over that period from 65 to 35 percent. The level of suspicion has become especially elevated in connection with the possibility of child sexual abuse or incest, with such accusations becoming increasingly frequent weapons in child custody cases, and in a few unfortunate cases crusading prosecutors have found this fertile ground for inquisitions and accusations based on scanty or nonexistent evidence. In Southern California one couple found that an innocent kiss on their baby's bottom on the beach landed them in the hands of the police on a bystander's complaint of child sexual abuse.

The application of the child abuse model to elder abuse meant, among other things, reliance on mandatory reporting statutes—laws that require physicians and others to report any suspected case of elder abuse to the state authorities. Based on such reports, the state initiates a rigorous investigation of those allegedly involved in an elder abuse incident. While legislation supported by the Subcommittee on Health and Long-Term Care—which it described in its 1985 report as "identical to the Child Abuse Prevention and Control Act"—has not yet been enacted, the mandatory reporting concept has been widely adopted by states. While prior to 1980, only sixteen

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states had statutes with such provisions, by 1987 they had become law in forty-four states, with legislation under active consideration in several of the remaining six. Federal legislation to mandate such requirements is also being advocated, with the U.S. Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop, among its promoters.

This apparent political and professional consensus on ranking elder abuse high in severity and importance among the nation's unmet social needs has apparently been reflected to some extent in public opinion as well. Thus, in a 1981 Harris poll, 79 percent of the public rated elder abuse as "a serious issue" in the country, and 72 percent evaluated it as "a major responsibility" to be assumed by government.

The implication of legislative pronouncements and enactments on elder abuse has been that it is a problem whose scope is well-established and that the remedies are apparent. Both scope and remedies, however, are problematic.

What is elder abuse?

Imprecise definitions plague policy discussions of elder abuse. The term clearly suggests some type of direct physical harm or exploitation, and this is what is visualized in the public concern over the issue. Mandatory reporting and other state laws on elder abuse, however, typically cover a much wider spectrum, as do the statistics commonly cited as demonstrating the extent of the problem. "Elder abuse" is almost always used as a shorthand for "elder abuse and neglect." Typically included under the rubric, and required to be reported, are such conditions as "psychological abuse," "exploitation," and "self-neglect," and these types of cases predominate in the incidence figures reported by most of the available studies. In addition, most available data are based on small samples of questionable representativeness. For example, the above-mentioned estimate that one million elderly are abused in a given year, an incidence rate of 4 percent, has been widely cited, taking on by repetition what Max Singer has called "the vitality of mythical numbers." This estimate, it turns out, is based on a community sample of residents in the Washington, D.C. area. A questionnaire was mailed to 433 elderly residents. Categories of abuse on the questionnaire included physical abuse; psychological abuse (including such subcategories as "fear" and "isolation"); material abuse (including "misuse of money or property"); and medical abuse (including "no medication purchased when prescribed," "no false teeth when needed," and "no hearing aid when needed"). Of the 433 persons sampled, seventy-three people or 16 percent of those questioned responded. Of these

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seventy-three, three people, or 4.1 percent, indicated that they had been the victim of one of the specified forms of abuse. Thus, in the projection to one million elderly victims of abuse, each of the three victims identified in the sample represented 333,333 persons. This obviously unreliable 4 percent figure might be described as falling in the class of "factoids"—numbers that appear to be facts but are not. Peter Reuter has commented that such "mythical numbers" are generated by the demand that the government appear to know a great deal more than it actually does, and by the existence of a strong interest on the part of those involved in keeping the number high and none in keeping it correct (or in admitting lack of knowledge).

The suggestion that abuse of the elderly by their children or other family caretakers is increasing with epidemic proportions is particularly striking since fewer and fewer of the elderly are living with family at all and therefore exposed to this risk. Among widows seventy-five years old and over, for example, the majority—60 percent—lived with their children or other family members in 1960, but by 1980 only 33 percent did so. The available evidence suggests that lack of a caretaker is a far more widespread problem than abuse by a caretaker.

Unlike the general population-based study mentioned above, most research on elder abuse has been based on cases referred to social services agencies. While unsuitable for determining the incidence of elder abuse, such samples do provide information on the circumstances typically associated with elder abuse. What they tend to show is that where physical abuse (typically a minority of "abuse and neglect" cases) does occur, the situation is often not a clear-cut aggressor-versus-victim problem. Frequently it involves multiple problems in the household. A mentally ill or retarded adult living with an elderly parent, for example, may have become abusive and increasingly difficult to handle. Such cases, while representing a real social-services need, are not necessarily amenable to an enforcement-oriented approach, and involve complex and difficult social-service problems that lack simple solutions.

The child abuse analogy

The favorite response of state legislatures wishing to "do something" visible about elder abuse in recent years has been the enactment of laws, centered around mandatory reporting, which borrow directly from child abuse statutes. Yet the differences between the two situations are fundamental. A child is assumed to require a guardian with custodial authority, while an adult is assumed to be

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competent to make basic life decisions on his or her own. Parents have both the responsibility to care for a child and the authority to make decisions for that child; in investigating the possibility of child abuse or neglect, the state acts as a substitute parent (*parens patriae*), exercising its traditional responsibilities to look after the welfare of legal incompetents and minors.

Mandatory reporting statutes—applying, for example, to physicians treating elderly patients—override the provider's professional confidentiality privilege as well as the patient's right to determine what is done with information they choose to share. Thus, if the statute is taken at face value, when Mrs. Smith complains to her doctor about her son's or husband's abuse or neglect, the physician must then report the matter to the state, triggering an investigation —notwithstanding his professional judgment about the situation or Mrs. Smith's own views about the matter. In law (if not necessarily in practice), sixty-six-year-old Mrs. Smith is thus treated quite differently from forty-six-year-old Mrs. Jones who is the victim of abuse by her spouse. The implication is that because Mrs. Smith is officially "elderly," she is by definition unable to choose to request, or not to request, outside involvement.

In overruling the professional confidentiality privilege, and taking the decision out of the hands of the victim, mandatory reporting statutes place the state in the position of substitute parent. The appropriateness of this transfer of responsibility in many cases of elder abuse or neglect is dubious. Children are, usually with good reason, assumed to be incapable of deciding when to exercise the privilege and when to give a doctor permission to set it aside. In this situation when the state acts as a parent, it is substituting its authority for that of the child's own parent rather than abrogating the autonomy of an otherwise independent adult, as with mandatory reporting of elder abuse.

Child protective services, while seeking to utilize counseling and supportive assistance where possible, ultimately revolve around custodial decisions. Where neglect or abuse is substantiated and serious, the typical outcome is temporary or longer-term foster care placement. This aspect of the analogy between child abuse and elder abuse services is, potentially, alarming. Nursing home or other institutional placement would seldom be an appropriate solution to a case of elder abuse, yet such fears on the part of the elderly may not be unfounded. According to one analysis of data from Connecticut, 60 percent of those elderly individuals receiving short-term medical care, as a result of mandated reporting, do not return to their homes.

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The dilemma of definitions

Virtually all these new statutes treat elder neglect similarly to actual abuse (some define the term abuse to include neglect), and they generally define both abuse and neglect, particularly the latter, in vague and sweeping terms. And while some merely require reporting while leaving penalties for the abuse or neglect to existing statutes, many others create new crimes of "elder abuse" and "elder neglect." Utah, for example, defines "neglect" as "failure by a caretaker to provide habilitation, care, nutrition, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical care, or failure by the disabled adult to provide the above services for himself." Any person who abuses, neglects, or exploits a disabled adult is guilty of a third-degree felony. (It is not clear whether the "self-neglecting" adult is also guilty of this felony. While such an interpretation was probably not intended, one can imagine such a statute being applied, for example, to a troublesome homeless person who refuses services pressed on him by social services authorities.)

Nebraska defines "abuse and neglect" to include "causing or permitting a minor child or an incompetent or disabled person to be . . . placed in a situation that endangers his or her life or physical or mental health . . . cruelly confined or cruelly punished" or "deprived of necessary food, clothing, shelter or care." Abuse is a Class I misdemeanor if the offense is committed negligently, and a Class IV felony if the offense is committed knowingly and intentionally. Wyoming adds to the categories of prohibited conduct "abandonment," which means leaving a disabled adult without financial support or the means or ability to obtain food, clothing, shelter or medical care. Abuse, neglect, exploitation or abandonment is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine or by confinement in the county jail for not more than one year on a first offense, or not more than five years for a second or subsequent offense. In Mississippi, neglect means "either the inability of any vulnerable adult who is living alone to provide for himself the food, clothing, shelter, health care, or other services which are necessary to maintain his mental and physical health, or failure by a caretaker to supply the vulnerable adult with the food, clothing, shelter, health care, supervision, or other services which are necessary to maintain his mental and physical health." Any "caretaker or other person who willfully commits an act or omits the performance of any duty, which act or omission contributes to, tends to contribute or results in the abuse, neglect or exploitation of any vulnerable adult shall be guilty of a misdemeanor" punishable by up to one year in the county jail. In Kentucky,

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"abuse or neglect," again defined as a single entity, includes the "deprivation of services by a caretaker which are necessary to maintain the health and welfare of an adult" as well as "a situation in which a person . . . deprives a spouse of reasonable services necessary to maintain the health and welfare of his spouse." Abuse or neglect in Kentucky is a felony or misdemeanor, depending on whether the physical or mental injuries resulting are minor or major. (Elder abuse or neglect can be a felony in nine states.)

Statutes vary as to the categories of persons "protected." Some concern conduct towards "older persons" or "elders," often defined as age sixty or over. Others apply to persons unable to meet their own needs because of such factors as (to use Utah as an example) "mental illness, mental deficiency, physical illness or disability, chronic intoxication, the infirmities of aging, or other cause."

One important area in which the statutes are remarkably vague concerns the relationship of the perpetrator of neglect to the victim of neglect. The concept of neglect implies disregard of a duty of care. Under what circumstances, and in what relationships, that duty is assumed would seem to be crucial, since, in general, the law does not elsewhere impose such duties on family members of adults (except, to some extent, for spouses). Among states with criminal penalties for neglect, some simply ignore this issue; thus, Georgia makes it a misdemeanor for "any person" to neglect a physically or mentally incapacitated person, and in Montana it is a misdemeanor punishable by six months in jail for "any person" to neglect an "older person." Other states—Kentucky and Utah, for example—only penalize "neglect by a caretaker," without defining the term. Mississippi makes it a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail for "any caretaker or other person" to abuse or neglect a "vulnerable adult." This new law, effective since October 1986, penalizes any act or omission that "contributes to, tends to contribute or results in the abuse, neglect or exploitation of any vulnerable adult."

Nevada has attempted in its statute to define to some extent the responsibilities in question. "Neglect" in this statute refers to "the failure of (a) a person who has assumed legal responsibility or a contractual obligation for caring for an older person or who has voluntarily assumed responsibility for his care to provide food, shelter, clothing or services which are necessary to maintain the physical or mental health of the older person; or (b) an older person to provide for his own needs because of inability to do so." (Older person is defined as age 60 or older.) Neglect is a gross misdemeanor unless a more severe penalty is prescribed by law for the act or omission.

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Curiously, the section goes on to state that "A person may be convicted of neglecting older persons only if he voluntarily assumed responsibility for the older person." Both direct acts or omissions and "caus[ing] or permit[ting] an older person to be placed in a situation where the person may suffer unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering" are covered. The law further states that "if a person violates any provision of the above section, if substantial bodily or mental harm results to the older person, he will be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for not less than one year nor more than six years."

The perils of legislation

It should be noted that criminal prosecutions under these statutes have thus far been almost nonexistent. (Thus, their dubious constitutionality has not been tested.) This seems a poor defense, however, for filling statute books with Draconian penalties for failing to meet vaguely defined or undefined duties. If nothing else, this approach breeds a general lack of respect for law, and creates the potential for selective prosecution involving unpopular individuals or highly publicized cases.

Mandatory reporting of abuse and neglect to state authorities is now law in all but a few states. (New York and, except for incidents in institutions, New Jersey, which both commit more resources than most states to community services for the frail elderly, are thus far among the few holdouts.) While the arguments put forward for mandatory reporting typically center on the need for case finding, the limited data available do not tend to support the argument that elder abuse is a "hidden problem." Such data as are available suggest that most cases are already known to social agencies or other authorities. In a Maryland study, for example, 95 percent of reported cases were already known to social agencies. In states where only certain categories of persons, such as physicians, are required to report, many or even most reports are found to come from nonmandated sources; indeed, whether or not mandatory reporting exists in a state, few reports come from physicians.

It could be argued that whatever the negative effects of mandatory reporting on physician-patient confidentiality may be, they are meliorated by the fact that these statutes are simply not taken seriously. Indeed, there is reason to believe that most physicians are not yet even aware of these laws. In one recent study in two mandatory reporting states (Michigan and North Carolina), 71 percent of physicians surveyed did not know whether their state required the report-

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ing of elder abuse, and an additional 12 percent believed that their state did not require reporting. As with criminal penalties for the substantive crime of elder abuse and neglect, it seems a rather weak defense of a law to argue that potential ill effects do not happen because those it affects are unaware of it or do not take it seriously. While seldom enforced, some fairly substantial penalties are on the books for failure to report. In eighteen states, it constitutes a misdemeanor, and in six states one can be penalized by a term of imprisonment (up to six months in four of the six states).

Most of the recently enacted elder abuse statutes, while mandating new reporting and investigative activities, do not appropriate new funds either for these activities themselves or for services to address the needs—of "victim," "aggressor" or commonly both—that are usually turned up when an investigation does find some form of abuse or neglect. Implementing plans to assist these individuals without institutionalizing them often requires costly services such as home care or guardianship. At best, such legislative responses constitute tokenism, while at worst they raise the prospect of a "cure" that may be worse than the "disease."

Determining the risk

If we assume that elder abuse, of whatever degree and however defined, is a problem of unique importance and priority, then perhaps it makes sense to concentrate efforts on locating every possible incident of elder abuse and conducting exhaustive investigations. But there are other critical problems that the elderly face, such as the nonavailability of care urgently needed for safety or well-being. It thus seems illogical to concentrate on tracking down every potential victim of elder abuse, since in most communities there are more isolated and at-risk elderly clients already known to social agencies than there are funds available to assist them.

Elder abuse investigations and interventions can break up what is often a complex social and economic set of adjustments surrounding an individual who is thought to be a potential victim of abuse. One result can be separating an elderly and dependent person from a much-needed caretaker because the caretaker is suspected of being possibly abusive. In such cases, intervention is justified only where the state has the capacity to offer something better. To resolve the problems often presented by these cases without institutionalization, an array of services may be necessary, ranging from financial management to home care for the elderly. Adequate levels of such services are often absent in the community; in their absence—or in

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the absence of a healthy respect for the client's preferences, even where they involve some element of risk or an eccentric style of life—institutional care may in fact be the outcome. In one classic study familiar to gerontologists, vulnerable elderly people in Cleveland were either randomly assigned to an intensive protective services case-management program or left to existing community services. The major, most significant long-term outcome was a higher rate of mortality among those receiving the special intervention. (The rate of nursing home placement in this group was much higher; apparently, social service intervention often led to the conclusion that the client needed institutional care for his own protection, and once placed in institutions, the beneficiaries of the program tended not to live as long.) Thus, the suspicions of often mistrustful and "paranoid" elders who fear involvement of the authorities in their affairs are not altogether unjustified.

A further problem with elder abuse laws is that they frequently fail to distinguish between an individual's capacity for good judgment and simply being old. The implication is that age itself is a form of disability. Florida's elder abuse statute, for example, defines an aged person as one "suffering from the infirmities of aging as manifested by organic brain damage, advanced age, or other physical, mental, or emotional dysfunctioning."

The assumption that the elderly, simply by virtue of being over 60 or 65, are typically feeble, poor, and sick tends to persist in our thinking about social policy for the aged, despite abundant evidence to the contrary. Separate legislation for protecting the elderly by, in effect, infantilizing them without any individual determination of incompetence, smacks of such stereotyping. Use of "elder abuse" as the central concept for organizing services for the elderly at risk creates an artificial split in the remedies and systems available to meet similar needs.

Why, given the lack of evidence either on the scope of the elder abuse problem or on the effectiveness of available services, has there been such a wave of state legislation for mandatory reporting of elder abuse, and strong pressure for federal legislation? There is, unfortunately, little correlation between the drama and media appeal of a social-services problem and the actual incidence of the problem. "Discovering" a "new" social problem has more appeal than devising more effective solutions to boring old problems. Mandatory reporting laws offer politicians an opportunity to go on the record in opposition to beating elderly grandmothers, while spending relatively token sums. The need to develop a comprehensive set

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of services to address a range of different types of endangerment lacks appeal by comparison. Topics such as financial-management services and public guardianship are complicated and dull, while the problems of those who simply need a caretaker lack novelty and threaten to involve expensive and open-ended service demands. The appearance of strong elder abuse enforcement serves to substitute for a more costly commitment to such services. It seems more than coincidence that the states with the strictest, enforcement-oriented statutes tend to have relatively low levels of financial commitment to supportive services such as home care. Elder abuse statutes also serve the interests of what gerontologist Carroll Estes has referred to as "the aging establishment," which she describes as "the congeries of programs, organizations, bureaucracies . . . providers, industries, and professionals that serve the aged in one capacity or another." The emergence of new professional opportunities for experts, social workers, administrators, and other specialists creates a constituency which benefits from defining the aged as dependent. As sociologist Lewis Coser has commented in another context, "Social workers [and] administrators . . . seek out the poor in order to help them, yet, paradoxically, they are the very agents of their degradation. Subjective intentions and institutional consequences diverge here. The help rendered may be given from the purest and most benevolent of motives, yet the very fact of being helped degrades." And as another observer, Edna Wasser, has commented on intervention with the elderly, "It is possible that even trained practitioners are unable to tolerate taking the risks involved in leaving alone many elderly people who prefer to continue in their unwholesome, marginal way of life . . . yet interventions, especially institutionalization, may be felt deeply by an aged person to be contravenious of his will and his most cherished desires rather than care and protection."

The rush to enact mandatory reporting statutes creates an illusory sense of progress on these complex and difficult problems. Enactment of new, enforcement-oriented programs for regulating the intrafamily relationships of the elderly, often at times when social services of more general application for the frail elderly are being cut back, is thus more a symbolic token of concern for the aged than a useful response to their needs.

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How old is "old age"?

PETER UHLENBERG

THE RECENTLY completed Carnegie Corporation-sponsored report on the aging society begins by asserting that "the inexorable aging of our population" is a demographic revolution that "will affect every individual and every institution in the society." This remarkable transformation in age distribution is clearly borne out by the data: The proportion of the American population over age 65 tripled between 1900 and the present (from 4 to 12 percent), and it is projected nearly to double again between now and the year 2050 (from 12 to 22 percent). The effects of this pattern lead us to ask the crucial question of whether the arrangements for supporting the older population that have evolved over the past fifty years can or should be maintained.

During these past five decades a variety of social policies were enacted (most of them since 1960) that enabled the elderly both to disengage from economically productive activities and to experience an improved standard of living relative to the younger population: Social Security benefits were significantly increased and protected against the threat of future inflation; medicare provided the old with national health insurance, while Supplemental Security Income provided them with a guaranteed minimum income; special tax benefits for the old protected their assets during the later years of life; and the Older American's Act supported an array of services

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specifically intended for older persons. As a consequence of these policies, poverty among the elderly declined, the need to work past age 62 or 65 declined, and opportunities to enjoy leisure activities proliferated. To achieve these benefits for the old it was necessary, of course, to increase greatly the amount of federal money spent on the elderly. Currently, expenditures on the population over age 65 capture 30 percent of the annual federal budget. If these arrangements are maintained, projections show about 60 percent of the federal budget going to support the old by the year 2030.

Yet this possible outcome is not due simply to population aging. Rather, the potential crisis results from a combination of assumptions regarding (1) future population aging, (2) removal of the old from economically productive roles, and (3) entitlement of the old to the variety of cash and noncash benefits now existing. While each of these three factors contributes to the projected cost of supporting the older population, discussions of options for the future usually focus only on the issue of economic transfer policies. Implicitly it is assumed that population aging and retirement rates are fixed for the future. Thus, the possible options include moving the responsibility for support back to individuals and families, limiting the cost of transfer programs by imposing means tests, and increasing the tax burden on the working population to meet the growing costs of these programs. There is, however, an alternative option for dealing with the aging of the population that raises a more important issue: Should the proportion of old people in the population be reduced by changing the age of old age?

How to define age

A perspective for considering the contemporary and future definitions of old age is provided by research on aging conducted by anthropologists and historians. Three useful generalizations can be extracted from the cross-cultural and historical literature on aging. First, old age is a socially recognized phase of life in virtually every society. That is, certain individuals are recognized as "old," and having the status "old" has consequences for how individuals are treated and how they are expected to behave. Second, societies differ greatly in the criteria they use to distinguish the old from the non-old, and rites of passage into old age range from clear rituals to ambiguous transitions. Third, the meaning of "old age" is highly variable across cultures and across time. Using these generalizations as guides to the future, we anticipate that "old" will continue to be a meaningful status, but that when it begins and what it means may change.

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While no one denies the social reality of old age in contemporary America, many would insist that the choice of age 65 seems too arbitrary. Given the biological, social, psychological, and economic heterogeneity of individuals at any particular age, how can one chronological age be used to classify people as "old?" Furthermore, few people aged 65 identify themselves as "old." Nevertheless, most individuals in the United States do cross some threshold into old age by the time they celebrate their sixty-fifth birthday.

Identification of old age with 65 should be seen in the context of the increasing "chronologization" of the entire life course. Chronological age is widely used to define distinctive life stages, from infancy through old age. Today there are two distinct changes in a person's life, both correlated with chronological age, that are the best markers of the transition into the last stage of life. One is taking retirement, the other is beginning to receive old age benefits. Both of these changes are nearly universal among those aged 65 and over. Regardless of other characteristics or attitudes, it is meaningful to say that a person has entered old age when he receives old age entitlements and is no longer significantly engaged in the labor force.

The obvious query, of course, is why does one's relationship to an employer and to the welfare state tend to change around age 65? This age, it seems, has figured prominently in social legislation enacted over the past fifty years. As old age became recognized as a social problem, policy makers were challenged to design social policies to alleviate the problem. Designing programs to aid a segment of the population (the old) that cannot be precisely defined might appear difficult. This was not the case with legislatures, however. They simply selected a chronological age as the standard criterion for defining who would be eligible for old age benefits. Starting with old age insurance in 1935, a gamut of special benefits has since been created for those individuals who can prove that they have been alive for more than a fixed number of years. And these benefits are essential for making retirement a viable option for most older people.

Although several different ages (55, 60, 62, 65) are used in various federal programs designed to benefit the elderly, the most significant age is clearly 65—the age at which full social security benefits, Medicare, and special tax advantages are available. Reflecting the semi-official status of age 65 as the marker of old age, statistics reporting on the older population routinely use a category of "65 plus." Researchers use this same category. Thus, despite the diversity of opinions regarding who "really" is old, chronological age is an accurate indicator. Many Americans have achieved the status "old" by age 62

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(they are substantially retired and receive old age benefits), and most are in the category of old by age 65.

In recent years, several experts on aging have urged that the increased use of age to structure the life course be reversed. Bernice Neugarten, past president of the Gerontological Society, for example, sees chronological age as an irrelevant basis for defining groups in contemporary society. She advocates removing irrelevant age constraints that operate in such areas as employment, housing, education, and community participation. Others (for example, Matilda White Riley, president of the American Sociological Association) protest the chronological division of life into three boxes—education, work, leisure—and support a reorganization of the social structure that will encourage interspersing of each of these activities throughout the life course. The case for beginning to deinstitutionalize the life course is persuasive, given the heterogeneity of the population within each age category. It is not, however, likely that old age will be eliminated as a distinctive stage of life.

Aging is a multifaceted process, involving biological and psychological change as well as social change. Attempts to socially eliminate old age as a distinctive last phase of life, without breaking the association of biological decline with aging, are probably futile and counterproductive. The absence of a specific age to mark the transition into old age would leave old age to be defined by negative biological changes, such as physical and mental deterioration. Under this condition, old age could be viewed only as an unmitigated disaster —that phase of life characterized by undesirable and irreversible losses. Despite its arbitrariness, then, the use of chronological age to determine when old age begins has certain advantages.

Establishing an age for entitlement to old age benefits aids individuals and governments in long-range planning. Further, this approach leaves open the definition of old age, since it simply says that, after a set age, the social expectation of being engaged in the labor force is lifted and the person qualifies for special benefits. Having a clear marker of old age does not limit the flexibility of what the elderly do, nor does it necessarily encourage an unproductive old age. On the other hand, it does provide added protection during a stage of life when physical limitations are increasingly likely to restrict activities.

The trouble with 65

If establishing a chronological age to mark the beginning of old age is reasonable, continuing to use age 65 for that purpose is not.

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Ongoing changes since 1935, when the Social Security Act was established, have made 65 an obsolete standard. For as successive cohorts bear fewer children and live longer, the age at which they enter the privileged status "old" needs to be increasing. Several of the more salient reasons for increasing the age of old age can be briefly stated.

- *Old age dependency burden.* The economic impact of an aging population is sure to receive increasing attention as the baby-boom generation ages. No society in the history of the world has experienced a situation in which over 20 percent of its population was over age 65. The options available for supporting a future older population of this size are quite limited: taxes could be increased substantially or the level of per-capita benefits could be reduced substantially. Faced with these alternatives, the possibility of reducing the size of the older population by increasing the age of eligibility for old age benefits becomes relatively attractive.
- *Potential of the old to contribute.* The potential productive contributions by cohorts after reaching age 60 or 65 has been increasing while actual productivity has declined. There is a growing gulf between what older people could contribute to societal welfare and what they actually contribute in the areas of work, leadership in organizations, and family. The members of cohorts reaching age 65 now and in the future, compared to those in earlier cohorts, are better educated and more skilled in their roles in a complex bureaucratic society. But as retirement has become pervasive and has begun earlier in life, the productive contributions of the old to society have diminished. Advancing the age of old age will encourage continued independence and productivity among individuals who are capable of making significant contributions to the larger society.
- *Social roles for old people.* It is frequently noted that role expectations for old people in our society are vague and ambiguous. They are not expected to work or support others economically, but it is unclear what their social responsibilities ought to be. The challenge of creating meaningful social roles for the older person is exacerbated by the expanding average length of time spent in old age. But the added years of life after age 60 resulting from declining mortality need not extend the old age stage of life. Rather, these added years can extend the middle-adult phase of the life course, when individuals are expected to be economically productive. At the same time, a distinctive and hopefully more positive last phase of the life course can be developed.

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- *High relative expectations.* Social and economic changes occurring over most of the twentieth century have produced a situation in which each successive birth group has been better educated, more urban, and wealthier than any preceding group. Consequently, the older population has consistently had, on average, less education and lower income than the middle-aged population. This gap in socioeconomic status between age groups is maximized during periods of rapid transition, such as the first half of the twentieth century. However, as a result of stability (or stagnation) since 1970, it appears that these differences in education and earnings will decline or disappear in coming decades. More recent cohorts of young people are not receiving more education than those preceding them, and their earnings trajectories are not exceeding those of earlier cohorts. The potential leveling of education and earnings across cohorts has two interesting implications for the elderly in the future. First, if the old no longer suffer an educational disadvantage, their ability to compete with younger workers for desirable occupational positions may be enhanced, especially if there is an increase in lifelong education which could keep skills from declining as workers age. Second, the ability, or willingness, of the young to support the old at levels considered adequate by the old may become problematic. Up to the present, the income expectations of the old (based on their past earnings) have been modest compared to the actual incomes of the middle aged. This may not be true in the future, as the middle aged no longer are advantaged vis-a-vis the old. Will middle-aged workers be willing to support retired persons who, on average, have a higher standard of living than themselves?
- *Future productivity of today's youth.* The experience of adolescents in recent years raises further doubts regarding the ability of the future middle-aged to support the old at relatively high-income levels. If the early years of life are a time of accumulating "human capital," such as education, that determines future productivity, there is reason for concern. The academic performance of successive cohorts of young people, as measured on standardized exams, has deteriorated in recent years. Furthermore, there have been increasing rates of adolescent criminal behavior, drug and alcohol use, and out-of-wedlock births. And an increasing number of children are living in poverty and being raised in single-parent families. These children and adolescents of the 1970s and 1980s will be the middle-aged adults of the 2020s who, if current arrangements persist, the old must look to for support. Perhaps renewed

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concern for the well-being of children will produce changes that will reverse these pernicious trends. But the recent experiences of children at least adds another note of uncertainty regarding the future security of the old.

- *Racial-ethnic age stratification.* The rapid growth of minority populations, compared to the majority, suggests another dimension of the future population composition. It is expected that the Hispanic, black, and Asian populations will contribute over 56 percent of the total growth of the U.S. population between 1980 and 2000. Since more rapid growth implies a younger age distribution, the minority populations will have quite a different age structure than the non-Hispanic white population. Projections for 2030 indicate that 41 percent of the children, but only 24 percent of the old, will be minorities. Thus, various racial-ethnic groups in the population will differ in the stake they have in programs that support different age groups. Might the growing number of middle-aged minorities, who are parents of a disproportionate number of children, resist increasing federal expenditures for the old, who are predominately nonminority whites?
- *Generational equity.* As government expenditures on the elderly increased in recent years, the proportion of old people below the poverty line fell from 25 percent in 1970 to 12 percent in 1984. During this same time period, the proportion of children in poverty increased from 14 to 20 percent. Will the growing costs of supporting a much larger older population in the future prevent adequate investment in children? Increasing the economically productive years of adulthood and decreasing the size of the dependent older population would not automatically solve the problem of underinvestment in children. These changes could, however, alleviate tensions between age groups by increasing the resources available for redistribution.

Marking up age

Thus far I have argued that the state largely controls access to old age by establishing a chronological age at which individuals are entitled to major old age benefits. Establishing such an age is reasonable: It allows long-term planning, it recognizes the reality of increasing risks in later life, and it avoids old age being defined as physical or mental disability toward the end of life. Yet if chronological age is to be a component of an aging policy, it is crucial that increased attention be given to where to mark the beginning of old age. Congress, in 1983, indicated some willingness to change the

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age when it passed an important amendment to the Social Security Act. The age for full social security benefits is now scheduled to increase gradually until it reaches 67 in 2027. Although this change is a significant step toward removing 65 as an untouchable symbol, it is only a first small step.

The problem with replacing one fixed age (65) with another (67) is that this approach does not appreciate how uncertain the future age distribution is. To be sure, demographers can, and do, provide precise projections of the future population, broken down by age and sex. Before accepting these projections as reliable predictors of what is to come, however, it is well to remember the heading of a *Wall Street Journal* article appearing a few years back: "Demographers Are Wrong Almost as Often as Economists."

To make a population projection, one must begin with assumptions regarding the future course of mortality, fertility, and migration. The difficulty of accurately anticipating these trends can be seen by reviewing the recent history of population projections made by the Census Bureau. A number of projections were made between 1960 and 1975, each providing a range of estimates for the population aged 65 and over in 1980. These projections turned out to be wide of the mark. Not only was each middle estimate too low, but also the range of projections never even included the figure of 11.3, the actual percentage over age 65 in 1980. These projections were technically correct, but they could not accurately forecast what would really happen over the succeeding five to twenty years.

The most recent population projections were made by the Census Bureau in 1983. In this report, the median projection of the percent of the population over age 65 in 2030 is 21.2, up from a "best guess" projection of 18.3 percent in 1975. The low projection in 1983 shows 17.5 percent of the population to be old in 2030, while the high projection shows 25.4. Three observations on future population aging are in order. First, each projection indicates a substantial future increase over the 12 percent of the population now aged 65 and over. Second, with the high figure being about 50 percent greater than the low figure, the economic and social implications of plausible outcomes are surely quite different. Third, we cannot be confident that the actual proportion who are old will in fact fall within this wide range. This last observation needs further elaboration.

What happens if the "low" mortality assumption of the 1983 projections is replaced with an even lower level of future mortality? This type of calculation was made with the assumption that age-specific death rates would decline at the same rate in the future as

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they did over the past decade and a half—not a wholly implausible situation.[1] Should this occur, in conjunction with low fertility and low immigration, 36 percent of the population would be over 65 in the year 2050. At the other extreme, the proportion of old people in 2030 could be as low as 13 percent, should there be a combination of slow mortality improvements, medium immigration, and an increase in fertility to the level existing in the mid-1960s. Admittedly, the extremes of 13 percent and 36 percent are unlikely outcomes. But substantial uncertainty regarding what the age distribution will be in the year 2030 does exist. Given this uncertainty, there is an advantage to incorporating flexibility in the age criteria used in social policy that will affect the future older population.

Any method of determining a chronological age to mark the transition into old age will, admittedly, involve some arbitrary choices. Nevertheless, it is possible to view the beginning of old age as a variable that can change over time and can be defined by a formula responsive to demographic changes. In addition, the formula should be simple to calculate and easy to explain to the general public. Details regarding its implementation would need to be specified, perhaps along the following line: (1) every ten years, using current information, a revised marker of old age would be calculated; (2) the new marker would be gradually phased in, beginning twenty years later (for example, old age could be advanced two months per year until the new level was obtained). Such an approach avoids any abrupt change and provides enough lead time for future retirement planning.

Four alternative formulas for establishing a variable marker of old age are described below. Variations on these proposals could be suggested, as well as altogether different approaches. The essential point, however, is that a feasible formula could be established and implemented to guide planning for the future older population.

Proposal 1. Establish a fixed limit to the span of old age. Rather than defining the beginning of old age by a fixed number of years after birth (e.g., 65), this approach suggests counting back a fixed number of years from expected age at death. Using a current life table, it is simple to calculate the age at which the average number of remaining years of life is, say, 15 (or whatever number is preferred). As life expectancy increases, the onset of old age also increases. Thus, any added years of life would expand the length of the middle years of life rather than old age. Nevertheless, with this definition

[1] Jacob S. Siegel and Cynthia M. Taeuber, "Demographic Perspectives on the Long-Lived Society," *Daedalus* (Winter 1986), Vol. 115, No. 1, pp. 77-117.

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most members of each cohort could anticipate a substantial period of life in the privileged status of old.

Proposal 2. Establish an old age limited to one-fourth of the adult life. Barbara Torrey, a demographer at the Census bureau, suggests a formula for calculating a normal retirement age, which is also determined by using life-table values. By selecting the age at which life expectancy is equal to 25 percent of the life expectancy at age 20, individuals would spend an average of one-fourth of their adult lives in old age. Compared with Proposal 1, this alternative allows the length of both old age and middle age to grow in response to longer lives.

Proposal 3. Establish a fixed ratio of old to middle-aged populations. Rather than starting with life tables, this approach keeps constant the ratio of old to middle-aged adults in the population. The age distribution of the population, as provided by the Census bureau, would be used to determine an age X such that the population over age X was equal to 17 percent of the population aged 20 tc X. Thus, the old age dependency ratio would not increase as the population aged chronologically.

Proposal 4. Establish a fixed proportion of old people in the population. A variation on the previous proposal would keep the proportion old in the population constant at 10 percent. Again, this involves a simple calculation using the age distribution of the population. Under this proposal, there would be no future growth in the relative size of the older population, regardless of what demographic changes might occur.

Calculating with variables

Using any of the above proposals, old age would become a variable determined by future demographic trends. The "new" age of old age in the year 2030 under each proposal can be calculated by assuming that the most recent middle-range projections are accurate. The results of these calculations are shown in Table 1. For comparison, 1985 is used as a baseline with age 67 used as the starting marker of old age in that year (reflecting the change in future age eligibility for full social security benefits). Proposal 1 (old age begins when average years of life remaining equals 15) and Proposal 2 (ratio of older years to middle years of life equals .25) produce the same result—the transition to old age would occur at age 72. By so advancing old age 5 years (from 67 to 72) over the next 45 years, there would be about a 24 percent increase in the ratio of old to middle-aged adults. Proposal 3, which keeps this ratio of old to mid-

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Table I. Implications of Alternative Definitions of Old Age[a]

Year and definition of old	*Old age threshold*	*Average length of old age*	*Years old as proportion of adult life*	*Old pop. / Adult pop.*	*Old pop. / Total pop.*
1985 (baseline)					
Age 67	67	15.4	.275	.17	.10
2030 (projection)					
Proposal 1	72	15.0	.250	.21	.13
Proposal 2	72	15.0	.250	.21	.13
Proposal 3	74	13.7	.229	.17	.11
Proposal 4	75	13.0	.219	.15	.10

[a] *Source:* Population data are from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1984; life table values are from *Life Tables for the United States: 1900–2050* (Actuarial Study No. 89, Social Security Administration, 1983).

dle aged constant, would start old age at 74 years. Under this proposal, average length of the last stage of life would decline to 13.7 years. Finally, Proposal 4, which keeps the proportion of old people in the population constant at 10 percent, requires the biggest change —old age would begin at 75. This alternative, which still provides an average of thirteen years of life remaining for those who reach old age, would reduce the proportion of all adults who were old.

Once the implications of maintaining our current old age policy under new demographic conditions are understood, the idea of changing the age of old age may not appear preposterous. Indeed, raising the age for entrance into old age to 72 to 74 over the next forty or forty-five years becomes a modest proposal. Unfortunately, such ideas have not yet received much attention, and the mechanisms to accomplish such a goal are still sketchy and tentative. Nevertheless, the number of options for dealing with the potential problems of future population aging is not very large, and there are risks involved in postponing the selection of one. To avoid serious social disruption, substantial lead time is needed to implement any significant change in the arrangement for supporting older persons. At the same time, the unknowns about future conditions suggest the need for a policy that is sufficiently flexible to adapt to a range of possibilities. A plan for periodically adjusting the age of old age for cohorts who will be entering old age twenty years later is a reasonable and not terribly painful way to meet these requirements.

Objections to enacting legislation that gradually increases the age for entitlement to old age benefits are sure to be raised by those currently approaching old age. Yet no change is proposed for individuals who will be reaching age 65 over the next twenty years. Further, cohorts approaching old age in the future differ from the

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current older population in a number of significant ways. There are, however, legitimate objections to increasing the age of old age without making concomitant changes in other aspects of the social system. If changing the threshold of old age is to have a positive consequence for individuals during their later years of life, some profound changes in the organization of society are needed.

First, changes must be made in the organization of work. The growth of early retirement has occurred because it makes economic sense within the existing structure of work. It will be necessary to introduce greater flexibility in work careers. For example, possibilities for horizontal job mobility and opportunities for moving to jobs with less responsibility and lower incomes need to be expanded. A variety of work options (part-time, flexible hours, contract work, etc.), if expanded, would permit an individual to choose an option that meets his or her particular work needs and abilities in later life.

Second, changes are needed in the organization of education. If older workers are to have skills needed to be productive or to make job changes, opportunities for education and learning throughout adulthood must be expanded. New forms of lifelong education could not only increase possibilities for extending the work life, but also promote greater opportunities for continuing productivity in non-economic areas of life.

Third, extending the middle years of life into the seventies requires that more attention be given before old age to problems of disability. Despite some contrary views, most studies of morbidity trends in recent years suggest that declining mortality has not been accompanied by improved health status. If disability in later adulthood does not decline (or increases), then advancing the normal retirement age would increase the number of persons unable to work because of physical disabilities. Increased efforts to prevent disability should be encouraged along with ways to provide more adequately for those with disabilities.

Finally, attention to delaying entrance into old age does not address the equally important question of what happens *during* old age. Shortening the duration of old age and reducing the proportion of the population that is old should facilitate efforts to improve the quality of the last years of life. But how to make old age a more productive and meaningful stage of life also needs direct attention.

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Our Public Television experiment

STEPHEN WHITE

ON JANUARY 26, 1967, the *New York Times* devoted a good part of a column on page one (and almost an entire inside page) to the report of the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television. The usually sober James Reston was rhapsodic: "The Carnegie Commission's report on the future of public television," he wrote, "is one of the quiet events that, in the perspective of a generation or even more, may be recognized as one of the transforming occasions in American life." And he concluded: "What happens to this report will determine what comes over the TV into most of the homes of the nation in the coming years."

Reston was by no means alone in his assessment. The report was received with general applause; a paperback edition was rushed into print, and Congress—perhaps happy to have even a small part of the public's attention diverted from Vietnam and student riots—eagerly provided the necessary legislation. By the fall of 1967, Public Television, now graced with capital letters, had been brought into being.

Twenty of the coming years to which Reston referred have now come and gone. Even the most fervent admirers of the Carnegie Commission's handiwork would be hard put to defend the thesis that it has determined "what comes over TV into most of the homes of the nation"; indeed, they would be horrified to think it was so.

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Commercial television, by any sensible assessment, has become trivialized during those years to an extent that could not have been conceived in 1967. The audience tuning in with any regularity to Public Television is still only a small proportion of the total audience, and does not threaten to become significantly larger. (And, it might be noted in passing, Public Television itself, now permitted to accept mild sorts of commercial announcements, has become as commercial as it dares.)

For all its occasional brilliance and for all its growth over the years, the system appears to be going nowhere in particular. Its central edifice, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, has become little more than a disbursing agency, operating for the most part on formula; its board is a locus for political squabble and has become on the whole a remarkably undistinguished body.

Little of what the original Carnegie Commission had in mind has been accomplished, and a second Carnegie Commission in the 1970s, convened to study the same set of problems, made no mark at all. It may be that neither of those commissions was up to the task before them; or perhaps the entrenched power of commercial radio and television had over the years established patterns and expectations against which a public service system could not compete and would not wish to emulate. After all these years, it is worth considering whether it was the Commission itself that failed, or whether its task could never have been fulfilled, or whether other forces played a significant role.

The birth of Public Television

The undertaking of Public Television began with C. Scott Fletcher, who was then president of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters, and Ralph Lowell of the Lowell Broadcasting Council, a consortium of colleges and universities that governed WGBH, a television station in Boston. Their concern was with the institution known as Educational Television, then slowly suffocating from lack of funds near what was necessary for any respectable television operation. Fletcher conceived the notion of a government commission to inquire into means of providing substantial federal support. President Lyndon Johnson, himself with a sizable investment in commercial television, suggested that a privately supported commission would be more appropriate.

At that point, Hartford Gunn and David Ives of WGBH, anxious to press things forward, turned to Arthur L. Singer, Jr., a member of the staff of the Carnegie Corporation, to explore the possibilities

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of support from Carnegie. At the time (and later) it was the Ford Foundation, and not Carnegie, that had been the principal supporter of Educational Television, and Gardner duly asked Henry Heald, then president of the Ford Foundation, if Carnegie might invade its turf. He was assured Ford would not mind and, until he left the foundation a few months later, took a continuing interest in the undertaking as Singer was assigned responsibility for further action.

It is appropriate, I suppose, that I establish my own participation in the matter. Singer was faced with the problem of laying out preliminary terms of reference for his commission, finding a chairman, and recruiting its members. His experience with television had been that of a dedicated viewer. He and I had worked together on this and that for a good many years, and at the time I was a producer at CBS News. Singer asked me to devote some of my attention to his current problem and I was happy to do so, thus becoming, after Singer, first man in. When the Commission was formally created I resigned from CBS to become assistant to the chairman, James R. Killian, Jr. I remained with the Commission as long as it lasted and drafted and wrote all the report except for a few paragraphs toward the very end. What I write here, finally, are my own observations. In no sense do I speak for the Commission nor am I necessarily expressing views of the Commission or of its members, or of other members of its staff.

It is my view that the Commission, in the end, met few of its stated goals. And it seems to me useful to inquire, after twenty years, why and where things fell apart. To do so, I must look into Public Television, but my principal business is a critique of the Commission, and not a critique of Public Television.

At the outset, the Commission confronted an existing system of educational television that had begun in 1952. By 1965, 111 educational channels were in operation, of which 66 were in the VHF band. Of those stations, 22 were what the Commission called "school stations," operated by schools or, in two instances, junior colleges, and providing little but formal instruction. Another 21 stations were state-owned, controlled by their state boards of education and, again, providing formal instruction at various levels. Universities, in all instances but one public institutions, operated 36 stations. Finally, 35 were community owned and operated: among these were the most ambitious, the most highly regarded, and possessed the largest voluntary audience, and for the most part enjoyed VHF allocations. It was those stations almost exclusively that sought to reach broad audiences, one way or another, during evening and weekend hours.

Almost the first act of the Commission was to abandon its terms of reference. The first position paper it received from its staff pointed

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out that the system as a whole was poverty stricken and that its sole real asset was its access to a prime-time audience. The paper posed two courses of action: the Commission could take steps to relieve the general poverty of the system; alternatively, it could concentrate its attention upon the potential of the community stations, draw up for those stations a set of goals for prime-time programming, and find ways of funneling significant funds to those stations, or at least to some of them.

The Commission on Educational Television promptly abandoned educational television almost entirely, and in its final report simply suggested that another commission be created, sometime, somewhere, to study that subject. It became, in short, a Commission on Public Television, although the name appeared only in its last days.

From that point of departure, the Commission was in fact concentrating upon the manner in which a cultural institution might be brought into being. Its target was never the mass audience: that audience belonged to commercial television, and in the end would inevitably be serving the interests of its sponsors. The Commission concerned itself, almost from the very outset and without a dissenting voice, with television art, television drama, television music, and what might crudely be called "television wisdom." The Commission did not for a moment fear it was creating an elitist institution. Its view—and surveys of the pitifully constricted services provided by a few of the big city community stations supported such a view—was that the desire to hear great music and sensible discussion was not the monopoly of some undefined elite.

Seven months after the Commission had released its report, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting set up shop with a million dollars and the assurance of Federal funds that exceeded by a factor of two the funds previously available to the system from all its sources of support.

The system booms

One statement about the years that have intervened may be made without fear of contradiction, although it may be the only such statement: The system has grown. The 111 stations have become more than 250 (licenses issued to state systems generally cover several stations) and budgets have grown exuberantly. The principal New York City station, which in 1966 was operating on a budget of approximately $2.4 million, twenty years later expended in excess of ninety million dollars. Inflation accounts for some of the disparity, but the increase is nonetheless in the general neighborhood of 2000 percent.

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For that outcome the Commission can claim a great deal of the credit. To quote Reston once again: "Dr. Killian and his associates have written a very sophisticated report . . . a candid and even eloquent report on their findings." The report had an almost immediate effect on the morale of the existing stations and, even before legislation was passed, had begun to stimulate plans for new stations. Financial sights were elevated and, in the community stations particularly, the horizon began to appear a good deal brighter.

Over the years the audience has grown as well, although as with all audience estimates, the figures are deceptive. In 1967 it was difficult to find an educational station with more than a trace audience over most of its prime-time schedule, although a handful of programs in a few locations—*The French Chef*, for one, and an occasional British program imported by Hartford Gunn at WGBH in Boston—did better. The Public Broadcasting Service, which distributes approximately 40 percent of the programs used by Public Television stations, reports its largest cumulative audience to have numbered 17.4 percent of television homes for a National Geographic program in 1982; its largest audience for a cultural program was 7.9 percent for Beverly Sills, in 1981.

Those figures, it must be noted, are not quite all they seem to be. "Cumulative audience" measures an audience that has watched at least six minutes of a program, and "TV homes" is not quite the same as sets in use. It is also relevant that programs distributed by PBS include none of the British programming and that the programming in question is skewed toward cultural programming, national news, and national commentary.

Financing has come from many sources, of which the federal government is but one, and by no means the largest. Fund drives, foundation support, and what may be called disinterested corporate support provide the bulk of the funding for community stations. The sale of commercial time, which was authorized a few years back, is growing in the larger markets. Specifically, the figures as estimated by CPB in 1985 are as follows:

Source	*$(000,000)*	*%*
CPB	110.617	12.4
Other federal funds	25.402	2.9
States	185.241	20.8
Subscribers	183.641	20.7
Business	143.599	16.1
State colleges	60.803	6.8
Local governments	40.130	4.5
Foundations	37.771	4.3
Other	110.699	11.5

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Those numbers can be interpreted in a variety of ways. I would say they represent pretty much what the Commission would have called acceptable. It is not the numbers themselves that are disappointing; it is the programming that underlies them. The Commision, I have noted, was seeking to create a cultural institution. In that, the Commission clearly failed.

Successes and failures

But perhaps we should begin with the inarguable successes. In one area, that of classical music and ballet, Public Television has been all the Commission might have wished. The broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera and Lincoln Center in New York, from the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, and at times from the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra have provided satisfactions that could never have emerged from conventional commercial television, although a few cable systems contribute for those with access to them.

But most such programs are *transmitted* by Public Television, not *created* by it. They are, for the most part, the products of established cultural institutions. To the audience, to be sure, that is of no consequence. But it leaves Public Television with no great claim to cultural achievement. There was once an NBC Symphony Orchestra; there remains a BBC Symphony Orchestra; no one has yet to suggest a PTV Symphony Orchestra.

As I have noted, the leadership of Hartford Gunn and others at WGBH in Boston had initiated, before the Commission began operation, an importation of British products, which has continued unabated. Indeed, until quite recently, the British library of serious drama, mystery, and comedy has provided nearly everything of interest in those categories, and much of it has been superb. (What is imported is, of course, by and large the cream of British production, most of which is no better than the run-of-the-mill American commercial product.) *The Forsyte Saga* and later *Upstairs Downstairs* were the system's first great successes and *Masterpiece Theater* continues, although it has been running out of steam as the backlog has diminished. At this moment, the third or fourth or later rerun of *All Creatures Great and Small* may be playing over half the Public Television system. The Shakespeare series came from Britain (with American support from Time Inc.). Almost nothing of comparable quality has been forthcoming from the Public Television system itself, although there have been occasional attempts.

I omit consideration of *Sesame Street*, which, in terms of viewers, may well be the most successful of all the system's presenta-

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tions, and which has the advantage of a constantly renewed audience. The Commission, as I have said, forsook educational television for the prime-time audience. In any case, *Sesame Street* owes almost nothing to the CPB or the Commission: it was created independently by Joan Cooney and Lloyd Morissette at the Carnegie Corporation, without reference to the Carnegie Commission and before that Commission had reported. It was funded almost entirely by Carnegie, the Markle Foundation, Ford, and other foundations, with late and relatively minor contributions from CPB funds.

Finally, there are the documentaries. With the passage of time the commercial networks have pretty much renounced any great interest in documentaries, which have become almost exclusively the domain of Public Television. In their present form, they trace back to *Civilization*, a British production, and, taking into account the fact that they have relatively small costs for what the trade calls "talent," they are vastly expensive. *Civilization* was followed by *The Ascent of Man*, *Cosmos*, and *The English Language*. A good many viewers are fascinated by them; a good many others find them pretentious. But I am content to call them successes; in any case, the enormous expense they incur means they are somewhat rare, and hardly a programming staple.

This, then, is the record of the Public Television system in cultural affairs. Another major category of programming that has so far gone unmentioned, that of news and public affairs, can best be considered along with other matters, which will appear below. Local programming of news and public affairs, by definition, varies from station to station, and it lies, as it should, outside the domain of the system *qua* system.

Washington's TV policy

Legislative action followed immediately upon the issuance of the Commission report and proceeded far more rapidly than the Commission could have expected. In broad terms, it closely followed the recommendations of the Commission. The Congress extended the range somewhat by including Public Radio—its own invention—with Public Television, but that was clearly the business of the Congress and not any part of the charge on the Commission. Still, the legislation differed in two important ways from the recommendations of the Commission. Neither came as a surprise to the staff of the Commission, nor, in all probability, to most of the members of the Commission or its chairman.

The most important was the flat refusal of the Congress to con-

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sider an excise tax on television sets as the source of Public Television's federal funds. This was the single element in the Commission's report that provoked disagreement, although not a formal dissent, in a note by Joseph H. McConnell that appeared in the report. McConnell would have preferred funding via a tax to "apply to the use of the airways by the holders of television licenses." The Commission as a whole had considered such a recommendation. It was clear that the television-set manufacturers would oppose the excise tax and the holders of television licenses would oppose the "user" tax. It was equally clear that broadcasters enjoyed more clout than manufacturers. The Commission decided accordingly. The intent in either case was the same: to immunize the system from political differences within the Congress which might lead to direct congressional oversight of the operations of the system and its member stations.

In retrospect, both Commission and staff can be accused of a certain naiveté in putting forward that recommendation. The Department of the Treasury likes a certain neatness in its taxing policy, and had only then completed a general tidying that had excise taxes among its targets. Add that to the natural objection within the Congress to dedicated taxes, and there was little chance that an exception would be made for the Commission.

Once the Congress had indicated its firm intention to fund from general revenues, the second change was all the more distressing. The staff had proposed, and the Commission adopted, an odd compromise in the manner in which the Corporation itself would be governed. It called for presidential appointment, with the usual "advice and consent" of six "distinguished and public-spirited citizens" to be members of the governing board and themselves to appoint six additional members. Terms would be limited to six years (after an interim period to establish a rotation) and subsequent appointments would be shared on a similar basis by the president and the governing board then in existence. The intent was to minimize, if not entirely prevent, purely political appointments. In making that proposal, the Commission was doing little more than making a statement. Any dim hopes that such a compromise would be acceptable vanished once the decision was taken to fund the system out of general funds.

The consequence was precisely what the Commission feared. Congress called for a board of ten, all appointed by the president, with the provision that at no time would more than six be from the same political party. The board was thereupon firmly in the politi-

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cal arena; appointments were made to pay off political debts, and from administration to administration the board of the Corporation was a political battleground, which worsened with the years and made constructive governance impossible.

John Macy, the first president, resigned after two and a half years when President Nixon vetoed the CPB funding bill. His successor, Henry Loomis, lasted a good deal longer, but as a Republican lost the support of the board when President Carter's nominees gained control, and he resigned. After a brief interim, Robben Fleming became president, remained two and a half years, lost the full support of his board, and resigned. Edward J. Pfister lasted three and half years and resigned after a bitter dispute with a hostile board. After another long interim, Martin Rubenstein became president and lasted a bit more than seven months. He was succeeded by an acting president, who at this writing has survived three months.

In recent years, the board has engaged in little more than constant warfare between Sharon Rockefeller and Sandra Landau, successive chairmen. The board is committed to more of the same, and in time succeeding chairmen are likely to be equally combative and equally irreconcilable. The Corporation itself, not unexpectedly, is bloated and laxly run.

The compromise proposed by the staff was, as I have noted, little more than a statement. It occurred to me only recently, some twenty years too late, that we might have made an even stronger statement, although at the time we lacked the wit to think of one. We might have proposed that half the initial board be selected for quite brief terms by the U.S. president *from members of the Carnegie Commission*. These members then would select six others and the board thereafter would renew itself on some practical schedule. And, perhaps, had we proposed an initial board made up of distinguished members from various fields, the political warfare might have been avoided.

It does not appear, in any case, that the sharp politicization of the CPB can be attributed to shortcomings of the Commission. It has been suggested, however, that a part of the failure might well be another unforeseen consequence of the Vietnam war. President Johnson had already come to recognize that the war had become his own personal calamity and that he could have no expectation of re-election; there was little else on his mind. Under other circumstances the Commission might have had its way, for there was some support for the Commission's plan in the White House. Plausible, but still . . .

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All this made for a foregone conclusion that the Corporation would be housed in the District of Columbia or close thereby. To have located it elsewhere would have diminished the impact of congressional oversight, on the general principle of out of sight, out of mind; to have located it in New York or Los Angeles would have provided far easier access to writing and performing talent, although at some cost to the system's capacity in national news and public information. Some attempt might have been made by the Commission, but in the light of events as they unfolded, there was no possibility of fixing upon another home.

Congress made other changes in the Commission's recommendations, but none of significance. For the most part, aside from its insistence on a politically appointed board and its refusal to countenance the excise tax, it wrote into law pretty much what the Commission had suggested and promptly passed the legislation.

Setting an agenda

The report of the Commission made much of "localism"; the system it was designing was to be erected "on the bedrock of localism." That may have been the most grievous deficiency of the report, and there is much to be said about it. But first, a remark or two about commissions in general.

Commissions of the sort created by foundations and similar institutions generally comprise men and women of considerable distinction who are by definition deeply occupied by business of their own. Over a period of about a year, such a commission meets perhaps a dozen times for a day or two. The Carnegie Commission may have been more sedulous than most, and its chairman was particularly attentive and effective, but the time it devoted to its task was not great.

As a consequence, such a commission must deal primarily with position papers prepared by its staff. It can, and often does, order up a position paper on one subject or another, but the deliberations are governed by the position paper, which defines the debate, if there is one, or stimulates the refinements, which are usually the principal concern. Someone once pointed out that "the man who holds the chalk runs the meeting," and in such commissions the staff has much of the time a firm hand on the chalk.

From the outset, the staff of the Carnegie Commission feared the creation of a highly centralized institution that would follow the pattern of networking in commercial television, which may have appeared the natural road to take. Yet networking almost necessar-

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ily implied programming for the nation as a whole, and consequently a concentration upon matters that occupied the nation as a whole. Such an approach would do serious damage to the two most important functions of the Public Television system, as we conceived them. In the general area of culture, it would prejudice the development of talent in all but the central city that housed the system. In the important area of news and public information, this approach would mean focusing on national events, leaving the stations starved for funds with which to handle matters of regional concern.

There were, at the time, a fair number of community stations that were interested in the sort of programs the Commission had in mind. New York, Boston, and San Francisco came to mind at once; clearly Washington and Los Angeles would be among them when stations were firmly established in those cities; Chicago and Dallas and Pittsburgh had shown bursts of creativity. The general scheme, then, foresaw a system in which perhaps a dozen would share the bulk of the revenues from an excise tax, would generate (with the help of independent producers) programs to be distributed by the system as a whole, and would produce programs, and in particular news and public affairs programs, of concern to the region in which they found themselves.

The report, it appears to me now, should have been firmly structured around that theme and not, as it was, around the Corporation for Public Television. (The inclusion of radio would, I presume, have in any event been mandated by Congress.) That there would have to be some central institution to manage the allocation of funds was obvious. But the major regional stations should have been called upon to establish their own governing boards, to formulate their own requirements, to raise further funds, and above all to govern the programming for their regions. It should instead have called for the creation of "an adequate number" of regional institutions and proceeded from there. In particular, the Commission should have been obliged to suggest a manner of handling the tricky business of selecting those favored stations that would carry Public Television. At the time it would not have appeared quite as tricky as it appears today, for there were far fewer community stations, those with capacity to serve a region were readily identifiable, and they were regionally well-enough distributed.

Whether or not a report of that kind would have altered the outcome is, at best, questionable. The firmness of Congress on the matter of the excise tax might very well have led, in any case, to exactly

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the structure that is now in place. But the prominence given the Corporation in the report, and the failure to sketch out more clearly the importance of regional stations appears now to have been a serious error.

The outcome was that with the infusion of funds those stations have, to some extent, come into their own. But the system inevitably necessitated what became the Public Broadcasting Service—PBS—to distribute programs created under the auspices of the Corporation. The programs it delivers—and consequently the programs that are created—are determined by the votes of the stations in the system as a whole, which is still predominantly composed of stations run by school systems, state and public universities, along with more than a few community stations with small resources or small ambitions.

And the news and public affairs created by the system is almost in its entirety news of national politics and national policy, most of it emanating from the national capital (which is understandably obsessed by such matters). It duplicates, to a large extent, the news produced by the national networks, although it does add considerable discussion of national policy. A few stations—notably in New York—add a full schedule of regional news and commentary, but in the country as a whole it remains in short supply, even though it was one of the functions the Commission itself emphatically wished to serve. (WNET in New York, in any case, is and has always been a maverick station: its programming is unlike any of the other community stations, which tend to follow a PBS pattern. It is also, for historical reasons, the only station in the system with a commercial rather than an educational allocation, which is held by the city-operated station, and for technical reasons it is obliged to pretend it is in New Jersey.)

The CPB has expressly departed from the general principles that guided the Commission, which was of course its privilege and to some degree its obligation when it believed such departures were in the best interests of the public. That departure is to be found in the very first sentence of the enabling legislation, which emphasizes (as the Commission itself did not) "instructional, educational . . . services." That there would be contemplated considerable support of such services is not surprising, for federal support, and the public and corporate support that would be forthcoming, would go in large part to the stations themselves, most of which were primarily concerned with instruction and education. The community stations, too, were initially created for such programming: It was their daytime fare.

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It would have been a good deal more in harmony with the Commission report if the Congress had been bold enough to emphasize the prime-time opportunities. The great bulk of federal money now goes to "instructional" and "educational" services, as was to be expected in any case; cultural matters are by and large covered by corporate supporters and general public support. In its annual report for 1985—the most recent at hand as this is written—its chairman writes: "We shall continue to emphasize programming for children, both at home and in school . . . One of the most exciting accomplishments was . . . the daily *Kids America* series. The new mathematics series is part of this effort . . ." In passing, the vagueness of both words might be noted. "Instruction" merges at one extreme with public affairs programs and, as the Commission pointed out, that we are all of us being educated every moment of our waking lives. The simplest fashion of expressing all this is merely to state that as matters stand, the Corporation devotes its primary attention to daytime television, whereas the Commission was dealing with prime-time television.

The talent gap

One of the first persons approached, back in 1965, to serve on the Carnegie Commission was Fred Friendly, then president of CBS News. Friendly did not wish to be considered. Educational television, he said, was of no significant importance. At best, its role was that of *The Providence Journal*: it might now and then uncover talent which would move to the Big Time.

It may be significant that in the event no such movement appears to have taken place—indeed what little movement there has been is in the opposite direction. In the area of news and public affairs some, although not very much, real talent has moved from commercial to Public Television: Friendly himself; Robert MacNeil, who is perhaps the best interviewer in all of television; Bill Moyers, who has gone back and forth. Movement from Public to commercial television, at least as far as performing talent or writing talent are concerned, does not appear to have taken place.

Neither is it clear that Public Television has generated much talent of its own outside public affairs. Jim Henson, who with his Muppets made his first major appearance on the system, is a truly great talent; Carl Sagan, who had been briefly on commercial television, made his mark on "Cosmos."

It might have been expected that a reasonably well-funded Public Television would repeat the experience of commercial television in its earliest days when there were few viewers watching. Young

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playwrights of real capacity made their debuts in those days and produced such notable drama as "Marty" and "Requiem for a Heavyweight." That has not happened to Public Television, and it does not appear likely to happen.

In the annual report referred to earlier, Chairman Sandra Landau deplores "the lack of a major, domestically produced public television series" without suggesting any manner in which it might be remedied. It is, one would think, something of a scandal that the British should have produced, with an American leading man, "The Oppenheimer Story." To be sure, the British have one enormous advantage over Public Television in matters of that sort—writing talent and acting talent and all the associated talents are concentrated in London, and are able to work more or less steadily in stage, screen, or television without moving from one side of a large continent to the other.

Perhaps associated with that favorable geography, the British have developed television formulas that Public Television has not appeared willing to borrow. The American formula for series production is a sort of all-or-nothing affair, for the peculiar economics of commercial television demand at least a hundred-odd episodes if the series is to show a profit. British series, for the most part, are planned for thirteen or at most twenty-six episodes and at times even fewer, which means that they can be tightly planned and produced with writers and performers who need not forswear other work over a four-year period. The result has been some remarkable television, duly imported by Public Television: such series as "The Glittering Prizes" and "The Norman Conquests." The British, too, do not appear to fear comedy, which was represented here only in the long-departed "Great American Dream Machine."

Public Television, in short, has not appeared capable of seizing opportunities. No longer poverty-stricken, it appears heavily committed to the pattern established when it was first created as Educational Television. In general, it lacks initiative and a creative spirit. That is not an unusual consequence of fierce centralization. But it is certainly not what the Commission had in mind.

It is not possible to know whether the Commission would have accepted a report much different from what the staff put forward, and it appears to me highly unlikely that the outcome would have been much different in any case: The best that can be said is that it might have had a better chance. The report did have an immediate impact that far exceeded our expectations. Yet it may be that a report more boldly configured would have earned a broad-based support that Congress might have felt eager, or impelled, to satisfy.

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Looked upon its own right, Public Television has much to be proud of. It must scramble still for funds, as any television enterprise lacking commercial support must. But it does continue to provide a significant number of programs of real merit. It has done so over a period in which commercial television has become more and more tawdry week by week, defaulted entirely on its responsibility for extensive analysis of important issues, and has now begun to gut its network news programs, once its pride. In cities where minority groups, black or Hispanic, make up a large segment of the population, Public Television provides significant services where the commercial stations, on the whole, make minimal efforts.

It is in the light of all this that the accomplishments of the Carnegie Corporation are to be considered. It may simply be that the Commission itself was unrealistic; that there was no general impulse toward what the Commission saw as the prime-time opportunities. The Carnegie Commission, whatever else may be said, set its sights high—perhaps unreasonably high. Only in that perspective is it reasonable to propose that the Commission was a good deal less than a complete success. It can certainly be asserted without danger of contradiction that the prime-time programs of Public Television in 1987 are incomparably superior to the endless reruns of "Japanese Paper Folding" and art museum tours in black-and-white that occupied the evening screens of educational television. And the shoestring upon which the system operates is lavish compared to the real poverty of the earlier years.

Only . . . it is simply not what the Commission was looking for. That is not entirely the fault of the Commission. But at the very least, it is in some part a fault shared by the Commission and its staff.

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The media's "American egalitarians"

AARON WILDAVSKY

Bias. adverb. In a slanting manner.
Bias. noun. Systematic error . . . encouraging one outcome or answer over others.
—*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1977

YOU are listening to Public Radio or viewing network television news or reading a major newspaper or news magazine. You are certain they are biased, i.e., slanted, systematically favoring one view over another. Yet media people deny that they favor one political party or political ideology over another. They are not party hacks, they tell us with visible irritation; nor are they, in all exasperation, ideologues. They are, instead, professionals devoted to exercizing as much objectivity as fallible beings under constant pressure can muster. Perhaps they do prefer the dramatic to the prosaic, for they must beat the clock by selecting from a potentially huge menu a much smaller number of items that can fit into a vanishingly small news hole. To guard against bias, they have institutionalized precautions. They split off hard news from soft opinion, writers from editors, news pegs (events of the day) from staged events. They cannot give mere opinion, for their stories must have a source, usually some governmental official, for anything they say. And if reporters are biased, a slew of editors are there to counter it. Their focus on conflict is real, they say, but it is exciting for the lay public that has to be wooed to the news, necessary to meet the competition, and does suggest there is more than one side to the story. Whatever their inadequacies, this typical defense continues, the personal political biases of media men and women do not intrude into their stories in any systematic manner.

Doubt it? Consult academic studies. These show that, except in 1984, when anti-Reagan bias was prevalent, television and national network reporters did not favor one party over another, nor were their stories markedly more liberal or conservative. How, then, to explain why both liberals and conservatives claim media bias to the consternation of those on the receiving end of these criticisms?

A clue is provided by a leading student of the media, Michael Robinson, when he sums up the prevailing view of scholars by concluding that "the national press is biased against everybody, but in

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near equal proportions."[1] Another clue was provided by a friend who told me that "media people are not ideologues; it is just that they hate authority and believe that money is the root of all evil." Now that combination of values may not be everybody's idea of an ideology—it does cut across familiar left-right distinctions—but it is nonetheless a distinct world view with strong implications for the behavior of those who adhere to its tenets. Since all perception is selective—without leaving some things out it would be impossible to focus attention on anything—an ideology that denigrates authority and rejects inequality does form a distinctive (albeit insufficiently known) bias.

I shall argue that the national media has a characteristic bias that could be called American egalitarianism. This bias is not recognized by those who hold it partly because it seems natural to them (as our biases appear natural to us) and partly because it does not fit neatly into the liberal-conservative or Democratic-Republican dichotomies to which all of us are accustomed. The fact that members of the national media are criticized across the usual political spectrum solidifies their view that they are distributing their blows impartially. Because scholars have not tested for American egalitarianism, they do not find it. A well-known research phenomenon—you only find what you look for—may explain why some of us find biases while many studies deny it.

THE liberal-conservative or left-right distinction is adequate for capturing issues of economic redistribution. But it fails miserably to capture differences on social issues. Thus, social conservatives generally prefer market solutions but favor governmental intervention in private life to support community norms. Economic conservatives, by contrast, dislike governmental intervention in both economic and private life. We used to think of liberals, American style, as favoring a greater economic role for government but opposing state intervention in personal life. How, then, do we explain their support for governmental intervention in the family to prevent child abuse or their interest in regulating pornographic material that places women in demeaning positions? If conservatives favor less government, moreover, why do they want higher defense spending? And if liberals are big spenders, why do they want to spend less on defense?

Use of a triangular scheme of world views will correct these anomalies. Individualists are people who prefer self-regulation to authority. They attribute success to individual initiative and failure to personal incapacity or governmental intervention. Individualists want minimal government in all spheres except where law and order (local or international) is concerned, so they will remain free

[1] Michael J. Robinson, "Just How Liberal Is the News? 1980 Revisited," *Public Opinion*, 6 (February/March 1983), p. 59.

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to transact with others as they see fit. Stories that stress individual achievement or the desirability of deregulation or the virtues of markets would be biased in their direction.

Adherents of hierarchy believe that social order requires the regulation of private life. They believe in and seek to enforce large moral and social differences. Individuals, in their view, are born bad but may be reformed through good institutions that inculcate desirable behavior. Success stems from following the rules and failure from disobeying the authorities. Therefore supporters of hierarchy believe that authority ought to adhere in formal position. Placing their emphasis on the value of the collective, members of hierarchies expect the parts to sacrifice for the whole. Hierarchies practice state intervention in all spheres, moderating their demands only when in alliance with individualists who won't stand for it. Stories that praise traditional moral norms or excoriate deviance or defend the nation and its institutions would reflect a hierarchical bias.

Just as individualists believe in equality of opportunity so as to expand the available resources within which some people can do better than others, and hierarchs believe in equality under the law so that people of different status can be judged according to their positions, egalitarians believe in greater equality of condition so as to reduce disparities in power. Accordingly, they want to diminish differences between rich and poor, black and white, women and men, children and parents, Third and First Worlds, and so on. Because authority is a prima facie case of inequality, they reject it. Failures are blamed on the system (the combination of coercive hierarchy and inegalitarian markets they call the establishment), and successes are attributed to following egalitarian principles. They view defense as an egalitarian issue because it takes resources away from social welfare, because rich governments should not gang up on poor ones, and because the established authorities deliberately overestimate the Soviet threat in order to perpetuate an unjust (i.e., inegalitarian) system. Stories on the desirability of reducing disparities in power or wealth or that criticize existing authority or unmask hidden hierarchies in public life reveal an egalitarian bias.

Egalitarians do justify coercion if it is directed against "crimes of inequality"—rape, racism, child abuse. Inequality may also be justified on an exceptional basis on the grounds that it helps "the unequals" in their struggle against an oppressive establishment. This is the justification the national media give for their special privileges and protections.

I call members of the national media "American egalitarians" to distinguish them from their foreign counterparts. Because individualism has been so strong in American life, egalitarians who are also Americans stop short of income leveling. Their egalitarianism is thoroughgoing but incomplete; no nationalization, no confiscation, no total equality of incomes.

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Egalitarianism makes the finding of little partisan bias in the news explicable. When election contests or policy divisions elicit media feelings about institutions or authorities, the treatment is uniformly negative irrespective of party. But when feelings about authority and institutions reinforce feelings about equality, i.e., when American egalitarians line up all their ideological ducks, we can expect an especially strong negative reaction. It was not that the major media liked Walter Mondale in 1984, after all, but that they disliked Ronald Reagan's policies so much that it increased their bias.

NONE of three recent books about the media have anything to say about how the public perceives the news. They do tell us a good deal about how certain members of the media treated specific stories, about their personal political views, and about how public officials deal with them. It is up to us to bring something to the discussion so as to make sense out of this disparate material. Let us see whether the books considered here, viewed from a triangular perspective, can shed light on allegations of media bias.

If the unexamined life is not worth living, the examined life does not exactly inspire confidence. To the adage that if one wishes to enjoy either sausages or politics, one should not see how either is made, one can now add the news. I thought I knew what I needed to know about Westmoreland versus CBS and Sharon versus *Time*; Renata Adler's *Reckless Disregard*[2] has convinced me otherwise. Her luminous intelligence and her controlled passion make us aware that these court cases point to similar morals. For this is one of the few times, in my reading the only time, that reporters and commentators have been subject to the same pitiless examination (deposition and testimony going minutely over the same ground) as is now routinely meted out to public officials.

How can I convey the sheer shoddiness of the reporting? Were it possible to make the evasiveness of the White House Watergate crew look candid, *Time*'s reporters would do it. And were it conceivable that the slant in the explanations of the Daniloff and Iran affairs (What, swap hostages for spies or arms, not us!) could be made to appear truthful, the CBS documentary on Westmoreland would do the trick. Like a caricature of a satire on Kafka's *The Trial*, leaving everything favorable out and doctoring the unfavorable that was left in, the extent of bias is mind-boggling. Shall we say that boys will be boys, that admitted excesses must be tolerated to preserve a free media? Adler's achievement is to reach inside her readers so they find such easy rationalizations troubling.

An international news magazine and a national television network accuse two generals of complicity in mass murder directly, by

[2] Renata Adler. *Reckless Disregard: Westmoreland v. CBS et al.; Sharon v. Time.* Knopf. 224 pp. $16.95.

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suggesting revenge in Lebanon, and indirectly, by falsifying intelligence estimates in Vietnam. No small thing. What, in such circumstances, do we think ought to be the standard of evidence? Must we, before leveling such dreadful accusations, positively know that they are true? Or should a negative standard—not knowing they are false—prevail? I say "we" because Adler rightly wants us to think hard about what we, and not only the media involved, would do. The jury in the Sharon case evidently felt some such compunction because, after stating that there was no "clear and convincing evidence" of "actual malice," it asked permission to include this statement: "We found that certain *Time* employees, particularly correspondent David Halevy, acted negligently and carelessly in reporting and verifying the information which ultimately found its way into the published paragraph of interest in this case." The reaction of the attorney for *Time* was: "We won, flat-out and going away." Won what?

ADLER offers more excuses than she needs to for the printing of the Sharon story and the airing of the so-called documentary on Westmoreland (an excellent CBS internal report found eleven major breaches of proper journalistic standards) in order to focus attention on the higher-ups who refused to admit their bias after they knew they didn't have the facts. When the correspondent on whom *Time* relied said that verification was in a secret Israeli document, and when his contention was shown to be false, he was asked to go back and verify his original information. The correspondent did so and reported that the same source he had used before stood by the story. Should *Time* have accepted an unknown source for a charge that involved killing women and children? (Would you?) Similarly, when CBS learned how its program had been put (or spliced) together, should it have withdrawn the allegations on the grounds they were far from demonstrably true, or adhered to them on the basis that they could not be proven in court to be demonstrably false? By this time, of course, *Time* and CBS were being sued for huge sums, hot trials were underway, and what was true or false factually, or right or wrong morally, got lost in self-defense.

Why, I ask, in view of my interest in understanding media bias, did these stories appear in the first place without a very strong evidentiary base? Or does anyone wish to argue that the public interest is served by making accusations of heinous deeds against public figures first and then deciding afterwards whether they were true or, more accurately, could be proven false?

What, I ask, would the reporters have to believe to think that their stories would be believed by their organizations? Sharon and Westmoreland were commanders of the armed forces of First World countries that fought wars in Third World countries, wars that were widely regarded at home as demoralizing losses. Who was to blame for these misfortunes? As the movie "Platoon" would have us believe, these wars were not directed against an external enemy but at the

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evil within us, not within the foot soldiers who were driven by circumstance but in the system that sent them there. Westmoreland and Sharon serve as convenient symbols of governmental systems that oppress other people as they deceive their own, for the good citizens of these countries would never have killed others less fortunate than they, had they not deliberately been misled. Had "system blame" not been part of the ethos of *Time* and CBS, had these media organizations not been peopled by American egalitarians, I suggest, they would not have suspended their personal consciences and abandoned their professional standards either by making such charges, or defending them, or expecting that others like them would applaud such actions.

If blaming individual leaders is evidence of "system blame," how do I account for the steady current of criticism, especially from egalitarians, that the media focuses on individual personalities, thus getting "the system" off the hook? Guilty as charged, but not quite. There is an inordinate emphasis on personalities and this emphasis does tend to overwhelm larger considerations. Taken together over periods of time, however, the incessant drumbeat of criticism surrounding those who occupy (or bid to occupy) high office is sufficient to suggest that the entire system of relationships is flawed.

"OVERALL," Martin Linsky concludes in *Impact*,[3] "we found that the press and policymakers are engaged in a continuing struggle to control the view of reality that is presented to the American people." Unfortunately, since the author has no hypothesis to test on this subject, we learn nothing about what these views might be, which ones are held by reporters and editors in the national media, and what difference it makes to their stories. We are told that the national media is important. Public officials who make active use of the media do better. Right. I fear for those who come to public office not knowing these things.

The author draws from a sample of high-ranking executive and legislative officials, ending up with 432 responses to his questionnaire. In addition, lengthy interviews were undertaken with twenty accomplished policymakers and sixteen journalists. What they say makes sense; the difficulty is that they are asked to take the place of the author in coming up with conclusions or relationships that have to be built into the investigation in the first place. (Did you ever change a policy because of media pressure? No one would admit to it.) *Impact* is uniformly intelligent, well-informed, and reasonable in its accounts and advice. However, it lacks a theory of media-government relationships guiding the choice of questions and their interpretation and, therefore, lacks exactly what its title suggests. Nevertheless, it does speak to our concerns.

[3] Martin Linsky. *Impact: How the Press Affects Federal Policymaking.* Norton. 260 pp. $19.95.

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Officials who have been around for a long time told Linsky that reporters are much more critical than they used to be. And they agree with other evidence that journalists have much more control over the content of stories compared to publishers than in the past. Self-designated liberals, compared to moderates or conservatives, Linsky tells us, were far more likely to initiate stories about themselves or their activities, to feel comfortable with media representatives, to spend more than five hours a week with them, and, by inference, to leak more data. The chapter on "Dispelling the Leak Mystique," which portrays officially unauthorized disclosures to the media as a cooperative game, is the best in the book. But who cooperates with whom? Self-identified liberals believe that leaking pays; they get more favorable stories in the press. These liberals, as I shall show, are egalitarians. Why, I ask, do American egalitarians leak more? Because leaking is an antiestablishment device. It is, as Cyrus Vance explained when asked why he did not leak, disloyal. Exactly.

In asking why egalitarians use the press more, we can turn to six case histories that are used throughout the book to illustrate media-governmental relationships. The reorganization of the Postal Service, which substitutes one governmental monopoly for another, involves restrictive job practices. The other five involve egalitarian opposition to existing authority. The resignation of Spiro Agnew as vice-president presumably reveals the system for which he stands as corrupt. The neutron bomb warhead portrays people in power who care more about preserving property than taking lives. Reducing the rolls of beneficiaries from social security disability is about a helpless minority that is savaged by an unfeeling Reagan administration, whose insensitivity is exceeded only by granting Bob Jones University a tax exemption despite an admissions policy favoring whites. Why, to go to the last of these cases, is Love Canal interpreted as an egalitarian issue? In the minds of those who think this way (actually not a single case of serious harm has been verified, but never mind), Love Canal shows that corporate capitalism causes cancer, i.e., that established authority secretly imposes involuntary hazards upon people who suffer irreparable damage. A nice system wouldn't do that.

EGALITARIAN legislators use media more to better effect and with greater confidence because the two world views intersect. Each believes in greater equality of condition. Each sees itself as battling against entrenched and unworthy authority. Stories that put authority in a bad light serve their preferences. Hierarchs, correspondingly, can expect to find less comfort when they seek to uphold authority or to maintain a traditional social policy on such an issue as abortion. And individualists who want to sell off public lands or to auction off "pollution rights" might not be greeted with open arms. Because they are not statist but egalitarian, members of the national media may be

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mobilized to support deregulation, as in airlines or in the post office, provided that the villains are overprivileged and people of lower income benefit. Differential use of media, therefore, may have less to do with ignorance of its importance than with a correct perception of what kinds of policies and politics are likely to receive a favorable reception.

What is necessary in order to test theories of media bias directly are surveys of its members' political preferences and investigations of their stories. In this way, the relationship between their preferences and their reporting, if any, may be appraised.

The great virtues of S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda S. Lichter's *The Media Elite*[4] are its seriousness of purpose, its diversity of methods and studies criss-crossing the same subject, and the authors' ability to relate media preferences to media performance. The book is based on surveys of the social backgrounds and political attitudes of journalists at the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, the CBS, NBC, and the ABC television networks, and Public Television. Content analyses of three major issues—nuclear power, busing, and the energy crisis—reveal how the national media treated these issues. These analyses are based not only on media performance but on how other elites, such as nuclear engineers, viewed the same sort of events. In addition, the researchers asked journalists to interpret different kinds of stories and various types of pictures (the Thematic Apperception Test, TAT). While ranging so far afield opens up the authors to charges of attempting to do too much, and questions can be raised, as always, about the appropriateness of their methods, weaknesses in one area are made up by strengths in others.

As is true of most elites, members of the national media have gone to school longer, make more money, and are markedly more secular than the rest of the population. More relevant to our purpose, 54 percent call themselves liberal while only 17 percent think of themselves as conservative. From 1964 through 1976 (in the authors' survey, and to this very day in other surveys), over 80 percent of media members support Democratic presidential candidates. Johnson was preferred to Goldwater 94 percent to 6 percent.

The strongest views of the national media are on social issues. Ninety-seven percent think government should not regulate sex, 90 percent think women have a right to decide on abortion, 80 percent support affirmative action. On the governmental-institutional level, over half believe that American exploitation causes Third World poverty, that the goal of American foreign policy is to protect business, and that use of its resources abroad is immoral. Five out of six think the American legal system favors the rich, while 49 percent believe that the structure of society causes alienation. In regard to

[4] S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda S. Lichter, *The Media Elite: America's New Powerbrokers*. Adler & Adler. 342 pp. $19.95.

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economic relationships, over two-thirds of the national media think government should reduce gaps in income, just under half want government to guarantee jobs, but only 13 percent favor nationalized industry. An overwhelming proportion, 86 percent, think that people with more ability should earn more.

IT would be difficult to paint a portrait of people who more closely resemble egalitarians tinged with individualism than national press and television journalists. They want to reduce practically every social difference they can find. They blame the system for exploiting others and for alienating its own people. Part of this rejection of institutions is universal (28 percent believe that all political systems are repressive) with the rest reserved for American inequalities. Their economic policy stresses redistribution of income within a private ownership that retains income disparities based on ability.

Surely our national media is not socialist. Before congratulating ourselves on having learned this much, however, we should understand that their nonsocialist inclinations cut two ways: While media elites are opposed to nationalization and leveling, they are also opposed to existing authority. Coming from hierarchically organized political parties, believing that bigger is better if social welfare spending goes up, socialists demand and support greater governmental power. Our American egalitarians demand that government reduce inequalities but they are opposed to increasing its authority.

What are the consequences of having national journalists who have predominantly egalitarian views? We have seen they overwhelmingly adhere to the Democratic party. Lichter, Rothman, and Lichter show that media elites uniformly cite sources for their stories that have egalitarian proclivities. When shown pictures and told tales that could be interpreted in different ways, moreover, "they ruminate on racism, poverty, exploitation and the ultimate failure of the downtrodden." They also evidence anger at "establishment figures as slavishly pursuing personal profit or narrow self-interest at the public's expense." So what? Why does it matter if vast majorities of nuclear scientists and engineers favor nuclear power and if comparable majorities of science writers who cover such stories are against nuclear power? The true test is in the content of the media. A content analysis reveals that, apart from a small pronuclear tilt in *U.S. News and World Report*, stories in the major media were decidedly antinuclear.

Stories on busing began with an affirmative slant that declined somewhat in 1973-74 as reports of white flight surfaced and climbed to an even more favorable level thereafter. Violence was played down, compliance played up. The findings from this content analysis are important, the authors rightly inform us, because they

> argue against one fashionable interpretation of media coverage—the "bad news bias," or the notion that news coverage of any public policy

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> issue will be predominantly critical, negative, or anti-establishment in tone. . . . The major media often dismissed or reinterpreted the so-called bad news about busing. In both the political arena and the classroom, they emphasized order rather than disorder, established channels for protest rather than spontaneous outbursts, and the importance of the end goal (integration) rather than the weakness of the means (busing).

The national media, in sum, is not opposed to established authority *per se* but will support it when it is seen to uphold egalitarian values, except, of course, nationalization. If one thinks of the bulk of its members as affirming the desirability of diminishing inequalities rather than opposing authority, no matter what, their stories on busing are not exceptions but are entirely consistent with their world view.

When oil companies make big money as their reserves are revalued upward during the OPEC price increases, the media plays up their profits; when profits plummet, they either ignore the subject or say that profits are too high. Analyses showing that profits in the oil industry over time do not exceed those of industry in general are disregarded. As usual, the telling question is who is to blame for misfortune, in this case energy problems? If we combine the oil industry and government as representing the establishment, and OPEC as outside of American responsibility, interesting results emerge. The *New York Times* and *Time* magazine blame the establishment around three times more than OPEC. The television networks blamed the establishment almost five times more (70 percent to 15 percent). Given a chance to externalize blame on a plausible target, namely OPEC, 60 percent to 70 percent of these important segments of the media chose to blame established American institutions. Their profession may impel them to be critical and their competitive position may impel them to be sensational, but neither professional standards nor economic necessity tell the media who to be critical of or sensational about.

I am less inclined to credit the views of Lichter, Rothman, and Lichter on the psychological dynamics of elite journalists: "We have argued that inner ambivalence toward power may be displaced outward as antagonism toward the seekers and holders of power." One reason is that I doubt the validity of probing collective psyches. Another reason is that I suspect most elites (including political scientists) would like to be powerful. My strongest reason is that power can be pursued in numerous ways. One could, after all, join the establishment as well as fight it.

To go back to the beginning of this essay, it is not so much the fact of bias, but rather identifying the kinds of bias under which the national media operates that will improve the quality of this debate. In analyzing the tendencies of journalists, Lichter, Rothman, and Lichter tell us that

> When their TAT stories contained socially relevant themes, figures of authority tended to evoke fantasies about the abuse of power in the form of greedy businessmen, deceitful lawyers, conniving politicians, intimi-

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> dating policemen, and sadistic military superiors. Conversely, socially relevant stories tended to portray the average man as the victim of malevolent higher-ups or an uncaring social system.

This is an egalitarian bias.

PRINT and television journalists are adamant about their devotion to equal opportunity and not to equal results. No intelligent person, certainly no respectable journalist, they insist, believes in such ridiculous notions as that all people are or ought to be alike. So far as it goes, this statement of beliefs, which I have heard many times, is accurate. But that does not end the matter. For the self-same journalists also believe that there cannot be genuine equal opportunity without much greater equality of results. As Lawrence Joseph argues in an article on different views of equal opportunity, "Compensatory equality of opportunity . . . can have quite radical implications, when carried to its logical conclusions." National media elites say "equal opportunity" but the evidence shows they mean much more equal results.

Knowing that they have not consciously worked out an ideology through which many conclusions flow from a few premises, television and print journalists are likely to deny the whole thing. Another idiot professor (who does not understand the constraints under which they work) has attributed to them concepts and connections that have never entered their minds. In that case, I ask, how come they sound so much alike?

Media journalists pride themselves on their individuality. They, so they tell themselves, value individual differences. After all, being unlike others is part of their stock-in-trade. They glorify the maverick, the nay-sayer, the whistle-blower. They identify with the outsider. But with the problems of established authorities, they show no empathy and little sympathy. Our national media support individuals who attack existing authority. These media elites do not recognize their own collective portrait, but it is there for all to see. Try for yourself classifying their stories as hierarchical, egalitarian, or individualistic and see how they come out.

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Morning in America, Sunset in Japan?

THOMAS J. BRAY

David Halberstam: **The Reckoning.** *William Morrow & Co. 752 pp. $19.95.*

Robert C. Christopher: **Second to None: American Companies in Japan.** *Crown Publishers Inc. 224 pp. $16.95.*

WHEN David Halberstam set out in the early 1980s to chronicle Nissan and Ford—the number two auto makers, respectively, of Japan and America—the trajectories of the two companies must have seemed to offer a neat contrast. Nissan had risen from the ashes of World War II to become a world-class builder of quality cars. Ford, once the very symbol of American industrial dominance, stood on the brink of financial disaster.

The human drama behind this reversal would have seemed tempting enough. And as Halberstam must have seen it, Nissan and Ford could be made to serve as proxies for a larger and more important story: The economic triumph of Japan and the crumbling of the U.S. economic colossus.

Alas, no sooner had the book appeared than events began to clutter things up. The seemingly invincible Japan encountered a major economic slowdown. Nissan's sales flattened out and in the first six months of fiscal 1987 the company lost money on auto operations for the first time in more than thirty-five years. Ford, by contrast, having introduced its innovative and popular Taurus/Sable line of cars, rebounded from death's door, reporting record profits. (In 1986 it outearned General Motors for the first time since 1924.) And the U.S. economy entered a fifth year of expansion.

The thrust of *The Reckoning* may yet prove correct. Japan's current difficulties may be only a blip in a climb to economic ascendancy unrivaled since nineteenth-century England. Certainly its trade surpluses show no sign of diminishing. But the turnabout of recent years suggests that the day of reckoning for America may not have arrived quite yet—or if it has, that Halberstam has less to tell us about its causes than he thinks. Along the way, however, Halberstam does tell us a good deal about the people, events, and texture of life in industrial America and Japan.

Nissan Motor Co. was started during the 1930s when the founder of one of Japan's "new zaibatsu" combined some minor vehicle

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production facilities from an older company. Ford and GM at the time dominated the Japanese auto market, but Nissan curried favor with the military, and lucrative truck contracts followed. The GM and Ford operations were closed down in 1936. In the postwar years, however, those Japanese companies with "militarist" associations were purged by the MacArthur overlordship. GM and Ford reentered the market, and once again it seemed there was little future for a Japanese auto industry.

Nissan nonetheless persisted, mounting car bodies on its wartime truck chassis. In 1950 the company produced a mere 12,500 cars. Orders from the U.S. military during the Korean War gave Nissan a boost, but not until the late 1950s did production really take off. Nissan and other Japanese companies were helped by growth-oriented economic policies, as well as protection from foreign auto makers. Ford and GM were once again effectively closed out of the Japanese market.

As a result, Nissan production by 1965 had risen to 345,000; by 1980 it was an astonishing 2.6 million (even though Nissan had lost its first place position to Toyota). At the high-water mark in 1983, Nissan was the number three auto maker in the world, after GM and Toyota. Ford had sunk to fourth.

A pivotal event, in Halberstam's eyes, was the 1953 breaking of the radical trade union that sought to socialize Nissan and other companies. A carefully orchestrated lockout, combined with growing workers' disaffection with their union, resulted in the substitution of more pliant "company unions." Halberstam also traces the almost comical early efforts of the Japanese to break into the U.S. market. When the oil crisis of the 1970s came, however, Japanese auto makers were well-positioned to cash in, with their well-built, fuel-efficient, relatively cheap cars.

In alternating chapters, Halberstam recounts the story of Ford over the same years: the genius of the original Henry Ford, how his twenty-eight-year-old son stepped in to salvage the company in the postwar years, the advent of Robert McNamara and his "whiz kids," the glory days of the 1950s and 1960s, the devastating Detroit depression of 1979-82.

Where Halberstam tends to see the Japanese as mostly virtuous, he tells the story of Ford in muckraking tones. There's nothing new about most of the revelations, but they give Halberstam license to try out a number of easy themes: the seeming "Calvinism" of hard-working Japan versus the decadence of hard drinking, womanizing Henry Ford II; the constructive "communal" capitalism of Japan versus the destructive Darwinian capitalism of America; the far-sighted Japanese attention to market and quality versus "bean-counting" American managers.

There may be some truth to these stereotypes, but in the end none of them quite stretches. Indeed, some of Halberstam's explanations are downright contradictory. When he criticizes the American market as too cut-throat, for example, it doesn't square very well

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with his lament at other points that the American auto industry somehow didn't remain competitive enough. His oligopoly theory of the American market is assumed, rather than persuasively explained. Little is said of the monopoly of the United Auto Workers.

On page thirty-four we are informed approvingly that Japan is characterized by "communal, state-guided capitalism." Later, we learn that most of Japan's planners opposed channeling precious resources into the auto industry, seeing home-built cars as a luxury Japan could ill afford.

And Halberstam opens his book with a portentous anecdote about a leading Wall Street oil analyst unsuccessfully trying to warn Detroit auto executives of a coming crisis in the early 1970s. The dunderheads refuse to listen, of course. "Powerful, successful, and conventional, typical of the corporate class, they believed that tomorrow would be like today because it had always been like today and because they wanted it to be like today." By contrast, Naohiro Amaya, the oil expert at MITI, Japan's chief planning agency, is reported to have long foreseen the coming disaster. Amaya is a "slim, graying, scholarly. . . . bureaucrat but also political visionary, poet and amateur historian." He and his MITI colleagues "spoke for Japan and its future," while the industrialists "spoke for a more narrow, parochial interest—the present, at best." But after all this buildup, we are told that even the formidable Amaya didn't expect an oil crunch to arrive until some time in the 1990s, which couldn't have been of much use to anyone bothering to listen in the early 1970s.

THE REAL villain of the piece is Robert McNamara. That isn't surprising. He also was the target of Halberstam's best-selling psychohistory of the Vietnam era, *The Best and the Brightest*. The body-counting Pentagon chief is here viewed in an earlier incarnation as the bean-counting Ford president. He is compared invidiously with such "product men" as Lee Iacocca, then a Ford vice-president and now head of Chrysler.

This, also, is a little too pat. McNamara presided over the introduction of the Falcon, which sold almost as many units as Iacocca's much-heralded Mustang. Halberstam also concedes that it was Philip Caldwell, widely regarded as a bean-counter among bean-counters, who, in the depths of the 1979-80 downturn, had the courage to bet what might have been Ford's last billions—$3.1 billion, to be exact—on Taurus and Sable. This line of cars, with its distinctive "peanut" shape, now is considered the stylistic pace-setter in the industry. Moreover, as Halberstam notes earlier, the architect of Nissan's post-Korean War surge to prominence was hardly one of the fabled product men. He was a banker "who knew nothing about cars, not even, it was said, how to drive one."

Unable to quite put his finger on what went "wrong," Halberstam's prose goes on—and on. *The Reckoning* is 752 pages long, in fact, and nearly every point is drilled home two or three times. One

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begins to suspect that such repetition is a substitute for a clear focus. The best Halberstam can do is suffuse his prose with vague suspicions that something simply is rotten in the state of America, or at least in Detroit. That something is never quite defined, but Halberstam at least once uses the term "malaise" to describe what he sees as the growing noncompetitiveness of Detroit. At other points, he insinuates that *The Reckoning* in America's auto industry is an analogue to the diplomatic and military "reckoning" he feels we suffered in Vietnam. The author paraphrases labor economist Harley Shaiken to make this last point:

> In 1984, GM announced its plans for the Saturn program. That was precisely what Shaiken had expected, an attempt to beat the Japanese with high technology—the creation of the superfactory. . . .
>
> To him it was an example of throwing money at a problem. It reminded him of the American response to Vietnam; confronted by a clever, relentless, dedicated enemy they could not understand, the Americans had tried to win by throwing their technology at the war, smothering both ally and enemy with it. That had not worked, and to Shaiken these auto executives seemed to be the lineal heirs of that Vietnam approach—virtually the same men, in some cases—coming up with the same responses, drowning a problem with money and technology.

But the Saturn project of which Shaiken speaks belongs to General Motors, not Ford, whom for better or worse Halberstam has made the paradigm of his story. And if anybody is guilty of throwing money and technology at the auto industry, it has been the Japanese. Fixed assets per worker (adjusted for vertical integration and capacity utilization) rose faster at Nissan and Toyota between 1965 and 1983 than at GM, Ford, and Chrysler. They are now virtually the same.[1]

What we have here is ideology masquerading as history. When Halberstam began work on his book, "malaise" was much in style and the argument over "industrial policy" was just beginning. Ronald Reagan had just come into office proclaiming "morning in America." How tempting to show that in fact it was morning in Japan and sunset in America.

While Halberstam is gloomy about the future of the American auto industry, and by implication about the competitiveness of American industry in general, Robert Christopher sees reason for hope. In *Second to None: American Companies in Japan*, he tells the stories of American firms that are competing just fine with the Japanese on their own turf. He offers this as proof that there is nothing magical about Japanese managerial capabilities or something intrinsically rotten in the state of corporate America. His book is written in part as a how-to instructional guide for businessmen seeking a piece of the action in the Japanese market.

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[1] For a truly illuminating discussion of these and other issues, see Michael A. Cusumano's *The Japanese Automobile Industry: Technology and Management at Nissan & Toyota*. Harvard University Press, 1985.

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Certainly there are some outstanding success stories. IBM has long dominated Japan's computer industry. Coca-Cola has half of Japan's soft-drink market. McDonald's has successfully transplanted the golden arches to Tokyo (mistakenly believing, at first, that it would have to change its menu to suit Asian tastes—and later learning that the Japanese prefer the "exoticism" of the real thing). Christopher lists more than 120 major American companies that earned profits of more than $1 million from their Japanese operations alone in 1985.

THE ROAD to success for competing in Japan, Christopher suggests, lies in concentrating on quality and long-term market share, not short-term profit. Yes, Japanese bureaucrats sometimes pose unreasonable barriers to free enterprise. Yes, the Japanese distribution system is difficult to master. Yes, the Japanese are ruthless exporters—"exploiters," if you prefer, of "our" markets. Yes, they have been highly protectionist, though that is diminishing.

But Japanese firms often find their government bureaucrats and cumbersome distribution system a handicap, too. Christopher quotes a number of Japanese businessmen whose laments sound remarkably similar to those of Americans. And he notes that trading rules favoring Japan were written in part by the United States. He cites memos from John Foster Dulles in the 1950s dismissing Japan as a competitive threat to the United States and urging the development of markets for Japan. At the time, of course, this was seen as a prudent move to bring Japan into the Western camp as an ally against communism. Christopher also discounts the role of the Japanese government in "guiding" Japanese industry.

"The point at issue here is one with a direct bearing on America's prospects for achieving a healthier economic relation with Japan," writes Christopher. "How one appraises the economic role of the Japanese government clearly must affect one's judgment as to what international policies the United States should follow. And, in my view, both those Americans who credit Japan's success in great part to brilliant central planning and those who credit it above all to protectionism run riot are lending implicit support to policies that would almost surely prove counterproductive."

Christopher notes, as have others, that even if Japan dropped all its trade barriers, it is still unlikely the merchandise trade deficit would disappear. Christopher also points out that it makes little sense to view trade deficits in a bilateral framework; we have large trade deficits with other countries that possess none of the supposed virtues of the Japanese, after all.

Where Halberstam sees American decadence, Christopher essentially settles for sloth. He quotes an American software salesman in Japan: "In my opinion . . . the largest invisible barrier to trade is American laziness." This may be, but it doesn't explain why some businessmen are lazy and others—the ones Christopher cites as so

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successful in Japan—aren't. There's no explanatory power here, any more than in Halberstam's "malaise" or "communal capitalism." Both authors give short shrift to more straightforward explanations of why the Japanese might have become so successful.

Far from "communal capitalism," the postwar Japanese economy was structured for maximum competition, and thus, maximum efficiency. The private sector was forced to compete viciously. As Christopher points out, the Japanese market offers ninety different brands of color TV and there are no less than thirty makers of personal computers. There are eleven auto and truck makers in Japan. Yet Japan's population is less than half that of the United States. To survive, Japanese companies have little choice but to offer high-quality goods at the lowest possible prices.

The Japanese government decided in the 1950s that what was needed was a small "people's car" that would get sixty miles per gallon. The central planners called for a design competition—but not a single company entered. They were already well along toward perfecting their own "people's cars."

The fact is that Japan's postwar economic policy—stable currency, steadily declining tax rates, a strong competitive framework in the private sector—readily explain that country's economic surge. (Ironically, as Halberstam notes, it was a policy urged on Japan's leaders by Joseph Dodge, a Detroit banker brought in to advise the Occupation on such matters.) To the "Dodge line," the Japanese added a stiff dose of protectionism. Not only were Ford and GM closed out, but also a 40 percent tariff was imposed on all foreign cars. Not until 1976 were the tariffs dropped altogether; but by then the Japanese dominated the domestic market and much of the foreign market as well.

THIS PROTECTIONIST history tends to muddle the picture because it can be used by Japan-bashers to explain away Japan's performance and justify countervailing protectionism. But Michael Cusumano, in his study of the Japanese auto industry, rightly speculates that Japan might have become "competitive" even more quickly without its protectionist barriers. Such barriers keep out foreign products, but they also raise costs internally. And Japan has dismantled many of the trade barriers it erected in the fifties and sixties. It's difficult to see how protectionism can continue to explain Japan's large trade surpluses. Moreover, the stable money/lower tax policy mix was employed with similar success in the postwar years by other countries, notably West Germany, which weren't as protectionist.

Robert Christopher makes glancing references to an entirely different way of looking at the "trade deficit" that removes it as such a cause for concern. If sales of American companies within Japan are added to the value of American exports to Japan, U.S. "trade" with Japan appears much healthier. But Christopher stops short of inves-

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tigating this further and does not even discuss the increasing skepticism among many economists that the "merchandise trade deficit" is a meaningful proxy for "competitiveness" among nations. In the end, Christopher, like Halberstam, simply accepts the conventional wisdom that a problem exists.

Perhaps that is all we can reasonably expect. Halberstam and Christopher have at least addressed the subject seriously, compared to much of the "yellow peril" hysteria now making the rounds, and treat the Japanese fairly, at times even more fairly than their fellow Americans. But neither has made a breakthrough of the sort that would tell us something new about our Japanese competitors and how we must deal with them in the future.

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Capitalism, Radicalism, and the New Order

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis: **Democracy and Capitalism: Property, Community, and the Contradictions of Modern Social Thought.** *Basic Books. 244 pp. $16.95.*

Peter L. Berger: **The Capitalist Revolution: Fifty Propositions About Prosperity, Equality, and Liberty.** *Basic Books. 272 pp. $17.95.*

I BEGIN by declaring interest, as the lawyers say. Peter Berger is a colleague and friend of longstanding. Therefore, at the invitation of the editors, I do not propose so much to review his new book as to use it as a point of comparison in commenting on another. The other book is *Democracy and Capitalism: Property, Community, and the Contradictions of Modern Social Thought* by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, professors of economics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Their title is similar in its reach to that of Berger's book, *The Capitalist Revolution: Fifty Propositions About Prosperity, Equality, and Liberty.* With that similarity in titles the similarities end. Between Berger on the one side and Bowles and Gintis on the other, a great gulf is fixed. Between these parties the "contradictions of modern social thought"—about capitalism, democracy, freedom, participation, community, and a host of other questions of consequence—are wondrously, and perhaps usefully, exemplified.

There are three dominant ways of thinking about democracy, say Bowles and Gintis. One is the way of liberal social theory and social science, the second is Marxist, and the third is "the radical

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democratic tradition and its expression in the social movements of the 1960s and later decades." The "later decades" of the last ten years or more have witnessed numerous efforts to revive the "vision" and "participatory community" of the radicalisms of the sixties. Bowles and Gintis are unapologetically engaged in such an effort. At that time, when people urged us to let it all hang out, Berger adopted as *his* motto, "Tuck it all back in." Obviously, the relationship between these two books does not get off to an auspicious start. Later, however, Bowles and Gintis declare themselves to be standing in a longer radical tradition consisting of "the seventeenth-century levelers and the eighteenth-century *sans culottes*, the nineteenth-century chartists and agrarian populists, and the twentieth-century feminists and advocates of worker councils." Their project is to advance a "fusion" of that tradition with the liberal and Marxist ways.

If people are really to take charge of their lives, Bowles and Gintis contend, it "requires establishing a democratic social order and eliminating the central institutions of the capitalist economy." By their definition, "no capitalist society today may reasonably be called democratic." They do not so much argue as assert that their admittedly visionary project is "feasible and attainable." They are, they say, "neither empirical nor utopian," and no fair-minded reader will deny that they are not empirical. While we are repeatedly reminded that their "commitments" are radical, Bowles and Gintis also insist that their argument is in continuity with key elements of liberal theory. For instance, liberty, which they define in language consonant with current liberalism, is very important. "Liberty thus entails freedom of thought and association, freedom of political, cultural, and religious expression, and the right to control one's body and express one's preferred spiritual, aesthetic, and sexual style of life." The definition nicely represents the authors' "fusion" of strands of a tradition running from *The Federalist* to *The Village Voice*.

ALTHOUGH sympathetic to Rousseau on many scores, the authors say they reject the idea of a "general will" because sovereignty in a society is "ultimately and irreducibly heterogeneous." Democracy means that individuals and groups have "trumps to play." This insight would seem to accord with what Berger and I have described as the role of "mediating structures" in society, but any hope of ecumenical convergence is shattered by the authors' withering criticism of those structures, especially of the family, because they are not truly democratic. Family, school, voluntary associations, religion (although almost nothing is said about religion), and work are all tainted by patterns of "authority." And authority, we are given to understand, is oppressive and exploitative. Capitalist society is inescapably a "mosaic of domination," and the "most ubiquitous" (and perhaps iniquitous) of these is "the domination of women by men." The patriarchal family must be dissolved by a radical cultural pro-

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gram of "de-gendering," and toward that end the "liberal rhetoric of rights" is eminently useful, the authors correctly observe. Bowles and Gintis seem to be aware of the troubling impediment posed by the fact that many people, probably most people, prefer what the authors call the patriarchal family. That is not surprising, however, in a liberal capitalist order which does not address the question of "how people might get to be what they want to be, and how they might get to want what they want to want." A visionary restructuring of the social order must look beyond how people are and what people want under the present "mosaic of domination." The authors have their eyes fixed on what people will be and what people will want in a radically reordered democratic society. They seem quite confident that, in such a liberated order, people will want pretty much what Bowles and Gintis want.

The new politics espoused by Bowles and Gintis is ambitious and apparently all-inclusive in its reach. The aims of radical democracy "include the creation and transformation of community and the establishment of individual and collective identities." Radical democracy has "supplemented the politics of *getting* with the politics of *becoming*." Or again: "The ontology of a democratic economic theory must encompass learning as well as labor, the production and reproduction of people as well as the production of things." The people to be produced by this "new order" will have transcended the crippling distinction between public and private and will recognize the contradiction between democratic participation and mere "representation" in political society. But, if this is to happen, it requires what the authors describe as their "visionary-historical approach to democratic political action . . . toward the goal of making people more nearly the authors of their personal and collective histories."

Bowles and Gintis are uneasily aware that collectivist language may alarm some readers. While they do not mention such unpleasantries as the Gulag Archipelago or Cuba's political prisoners, they perhaps have them in mind when they rather delicately acknowledge that "the precise social institutions regulating this 'collective control' have remained elusive in the Marxian tradition." They admit that there is a danger that "a society might by chance exhibit only one set of rules" and thus constitute a new form of oppression. (The "by chance" is a very nice touch.) In this connection "prestate kinship-based societies or some form of totalitarian dictatorship come to mind." Thus, totalitarianism does come to the collective mind of Bowles and Gintis, but it is quickly put out of mind: "However, we doubt that this possibility is of concrete importance." (The entire reference to totalitarianism, not so incidently, is in parentheses.)

IN the course of their 213-page text, Bowles and Gintis do ample justice to the depredations of capitalism in its alienation of labor, its exploitation of poor countries through transnational corpora-

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tions, its "capital strikes" against promising socialist experiments, and other nefarious workings. It would be both churlish and incorrect to suggest that they have not done their best to touch all bases mandated in a socialist broadside. And yet it is not until four pages from the end that they explain why they have been talking about democracy rather than about socialism in the setting forth of their "new social order." "We have chosen to term our visionary-historical alternative postliberal democracy rather than socialism simply because we regard those time-honored commitments of socialists not as ends in themselves but as means toward securing an expanded conception of liberty and popular sovereignty." Readers are assured that this "in no way diminishes our commitment to these objectives [of socialism]" but, unlike some socialists, they do not believe that democracy is a mere means "for the achievement of classlessness." The authors' vision of "postliberal democracy" is the end toward which socialism, however indispensable, does not go far enough.

Bowles and Gintis then add, with what I confess to find a fetching ingenuousness: "Our choice of terms reflects a recognition of both the hegemony of liberal democratic discourse as the virtually exclusive medium of political communication in the advanced capitalist nations and the profoundly contradictory, malleable, and potentially radical nature of this discourse." In other words: If you want socialism, talk democracy. It is not simply a matter of talk, however. In the authors' "visionary-historical" view of things, liberal democracy has been put on the ropes by its own commitment to rights. Extend the logic of rights to economic and social rights, incorporate the so-called private sphere into the radical democratic politics of the new order, and liberal democracy is knocked out for the count. On this strategy Bowles and Gintis, like so many in the 1960s, rest their hopes for the coming of "postliberal democracy." Needless to say, these hopes may turn out to be fully justified.

THE CAPITALIST REVOLUTION could hardly be more different. Peter Berger attempts no grand fusions of traditions. Rather, he believes some choices must be made. In terms of economic development and democracy, the choice is essentially between socialism and capitalism. For the poor countries of the world, these represent the dominant models that provide an entry point into modernity. Unlike Bowles and Gintis, Berger has no doubt that there are available case studies for examining what he means by both capitalism and socialism. With assiduous—some might say painful—care he describes the existent gradations of each model, from archetypes to marginal cases. Those who are looking for a "visionary" treatment of capitalism and democracy might well be disappointed with Berger, for he is adamantly empirical in his approach. Ideas are always held accountable to the grubby details of what societies have actually done, and the consequences of such actions for the people in those societies.

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Bowles and Gintis, too, acknowledge that capitalism has had a revolutionary impact, but that impact has mainly been to prepare the world for the real revolution that is beyond and against capitalism. They admit that capitalism has succeeded in "putting bread on the table," but that achievement is but a prelude to the real democratic politics which, after capitalism, will find a better way of putting bread on the table and will do so much else that goes beyond satisfying mere material needs. In such a view, Berger and most of mankind are excessively preoccupied with bread. The democratic politics that Bowles and Gintis seek will produce people who are the artisans of their own destinies, will constitute individual and communal identities, and will fulfill human aspirations to live in the kingdom of freedom beyond structures of authority. Berger, by contrast, thinks democracy a very good thing because it protects the sphere of privacy that Bowles and Gintis want to eliminate, and because it enables individuals to act, also economically, without the permission of the collective. Berger is, to say the least, very skeptical of the proposition that political economy or economic politics can deliver on the promise of human salvation. In sum, Berger is, in the eyes of Bowles, Gintis, and company, an unbeliever.

Contra *Democracy and Capitalism*, Berger thinks that totalitarianism—as threat, temptation and existent oppression—is of great "concrete importance." Because of both external challenges and internal contradictions, Berger recognizes the fragility of the democratic achievement to date. With respect to the internal contradictions of democratic capitalism, Berger and Bowles and Gintis are in agreement. The difference is that Bowles and Gintis expect and hope that those internal contradictions can be exploited in order to replace democratic capitalism with "real democracy." Berger's argument offers little grounds for confidence that that expectation and hope can be frustrated. He asserts that democratic capitalism, unlike socialism, does not possess a powerful vision or mythopoetic legitimation. The main argument in its favor is that, on balance, it works better in terms of what most people want. Whether in the United States, Africa or East Asia (and Berger devotes very particular attention to East Asia), democratic capitalism has a very impressive track record of being very good for people as they themselves define their needs and desires. The record of socialism, as Berger documents with almost excruciating objectivity, could hardly be in sharper contrast.

Berger may be altogether too modest about the appeal of democratic capitalism. A driving mythopoetic vision it may not have, but then most people, even most intellectuals, are not looking for salvation through politics. The appeal of democratic capitalism is commonsensical and empirical. It can even enlist the sentiments of compassion among those who care enough about the poor to examine what alternative economic and political approaches do for and to the poor. Admittedly, much of the new "knowledge class" repre-

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sented by Bowles and Gintis is caught up in the visionary-historical prospect of the new woman/man in the new order and is overweeningly confident about what people will want when they become the kind of people who want what they should want. But where elements of economic and political accountability are nurtured, that prospect will have limited plausibility and appeal. Bowles and Gintis almost perfectly, albeit unselfconsciously, represent the new knowledge class that Berger has analyzed, and I would not disagree with Berger about the incipiently tyrannical influence of that class. But it does not hold the field alone. Against it is arrayed what might be described as the bourgeois insurgency that is breaking out in this country and elsewhere, as well as the powerful appeal of a populism that need not be demagogic.

BERGER well knows that capitalism is not a sufficient condition for democracy, but the evidence suggests that it is a necessary condition. Its appeal is in its democratic responsiveness to human needs as existent people perceive those needs. In addition, the performance of capitalism and socialism can be measured by the "values" held by most people. That these values are indeed commonly held can, in turn, be supported by convincing empirical evidence. Berger itemizes some such values: the material well-being of people, especially of the poor; equality; political liberties and democracy; protection of human rights; individual autonomy; preservation of tradition; community. On all these scores, capitalism is clearly superior to socialism. Berger recognizes, however, that each of these values can be defined in a way that no existing capitalism or socialism can ever satisfy. For example, on community Berger writes: "For those, however, who aspire toward some new, all-embracing community, transcending anything to be found in the world today, socialism will very probably continue to be the preferred choice."

Socialism specializes in the dreaming of impossible dreams; it does not hesitate to promise anything and everything. In the new order envisioned by Bowles and Gintis and their like, authority, greed, loneliness, brutality, and presumably headaches and constipation have no place. Human nature is a fiction and human beings are almost infinitely malleable. The "is-ness" of things is subordinated to the "becoming" of everything. "We do not consider domination an expression of the human condition," they imperially announce. We do not consider it to be thus, therefore it is not thus. A different world is ours to will into being. Little wonder, then, that Berger thinks democratic capitalism is at a severe disadvantage, having nothing in its favor but the facts. Berger's argument, both empirical and moral, is an argument appropriate to *this* world.

Berger's *The Capitalist Revolution* is a tour de force that is convincing in its conclusions. It might have been more hopeful in its conclusions had Berger stressed the evidence that more and more people are now seeing through the fatuities promised in the visionary-

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historical proposals of their over-educated betters. In a century that has slogged through the rivers of blood and across the piles of corpses produced by sundry socialisms, the presumed advantage of mythopoetic proposals is wearing thin. Closely related to that is a global religious reawakening in which people are looking neither to democratic capitalism nor to socialism to fulfill their aspirations toward a new heaven and a new earth. The new knowledge-class peddlers of prefabricated eschatologies are not about to go away, and no doubt they will continue to cause considerable confusion and damage. But, as Berger amply demonstrates, socialism in all its varieties has fatally overplayed its hand. This is not a time for timidity on the part of the proponents of the capitalist revolution.

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Fairy Tales About a "New America"

IRWIN M. STELZER

Robert B. Reich: **Tales of a New America.** *Times Books. 290 pp. $19.95.*

ANY BOOK that can receive a fly-leaf endorsement from both George Gilder and Mario Cuomo can't be ignored. And Professor Reich's latest effort to examine America's "collective vision" of itself certainly should not be. For this is a highly provocative and brilliantly written book. Its fluent prose is, however, a danger as well as a virtue—a virtue because it makes for entertaining reading, a danger because it is the spoonful of sugar that makes this particular medicine go down, without the reader being fully aware of the hazardous side effects it might have.

Reich argues that we tend to misdefine the problems we face because we are the prisoners of four myths, rooted in the central experience of American history. These myths he calls The Mob at the Gates, the Triumphant Individual, the Benevolent Community, and The Rot At The Top. The first of these divides "them" from "us," and is based on the notion that America is an island of virtue in a sea of darkness, surrounded by a less fortunate "them," against whom we must be continually on guard. The second myth, that of the triumphant individual, is that, as Reich puts it, "the little guy who works hard, takes risks, believes in himself" will eventually succeed in America. The myth of the benevolent community holds that America is a generous and compassionate country, sensitive to those in need. Finally, those who believe in "the rot at the top" see

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malevolent, powerful elites, be they business leaders or government officials, as the source of a conspiracy to deprive "the common man" of his just due.

The presence of these myths, the story goes on, constrains our public discourse and limits our "repertoire of responses" to two broad categories: disciplining the barbarians, or businessmen, or government officials, or foreign competitors; or conciliating them through generosity and understanding.

In an increasingly interdependent world economy, this limitation on discourse prevents us from defining our problems in a realistic way, and from developing solutions that fit neither the traditional liberal nor the emergent conservative molds. Thus we find, for example, that in framing domestic policy we veer between governmental efforts to dictate economic outcomes, an approach that leads to enormous inefficiencies, and permitting "unfettered profit seeking" that neglects the broader costs and benefits of individual economic activity. In foreign affairs we find ourselves attempting to lock the gates against "the mob" by erecting tariff barriers against Japanese competitors and attempting to seal our borders against immigrants looking only for work; engaged in bellicose attempts to bully the Soviets into abandoning efforts to expand their empire; and imposing austerity on debtor nations already suffering from low standards of living, the latter in part due to our willingness to sell arms to Latin American regimes.

There is some sense in all of this. Reich points out, with great force, that increased international dependence has made it more difficult for us to act alone, particularly in economic affairs; almost impossible for us to "keep things out" (immigrants, pollution emanating from Mexican smelters). And internationalization also, as Reich notes, makes it less clear just who "we" and "they" are: witness the increasing number of joint ventures between American and Japanese automobile companies and financial institutions.

He also makes clear how inefficient are governments' attempts to order the results of the marketplace, and quite sensibly urges that government confine itself to designing the rules of the marketplace in such a way as to encourage competition and the internationalization of external costs and benefits.

But these virtues notwithstanding, Reich's basic argument is fundamentally flawed, in its two most important aspects. First, what he calls "myths" remain reasonable working guides to the establishment of policy. And, second, his apparently evenhanded condemnation of liberals and conservatives, in an effort to stake out some sort of new or middle position, is in reality a defense of old, liberal solutions, and an unfair attack on the conservative position.

REICH'S VIEW that there is no "mob at the gates" seeking to overwhelm America and its traditional values rests on the notion that interdependence has, in all except a few cases, replaced the

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adversarial relationship that many Americans feel exists between us and other countries. Certainly, there is some truth in this: Protectionist trade policies would be as destructive to us as to our trading partners. But one cannot extend that truism to all aspects of our relationships with foreign nations. Certainly, there is no evidence that Soviet expansionism is somehow giving way to an increased awareness on Russia's part that we are, in the end, all dependent on one another, and that there can be no winners and losers in international competition. Indeed, Reich himself concedes, in a single sentence, that there are "a few groups" whose values are so antithetical to our own that they must be viewed as enemies. And these groups include "Communist butcher regimes." (Which of the communist regimes in Asia, Africa, Europe or the Caribbean are not "butcher regimes" remains unspecified.) The acknowledgement of the existence of these enemies, however, does not drive Reich to support higher military spending. His solution: "Our best response to such true members of the Mob has been and continues to be making common cause with other peoples against them." No one can argue with that. But one can wonder how that can be accomplished without the increased military spending that Reich finds so objectionable because, in his view, it leads to unbalanced budgets, excessive borrowing, an over-valued dollar and a burgeoning trade deficit. Nor does Reich anywhere explain why these undesirable effects of increased military spending are not equally the consequence of runaway expenditures on social welfare programs, many of which he favors expanding.

The second belief that Reich would have us classify as a myth is our faith in the "Triumphant Individual"—the entrepreneur whose daring and initiative fuels America's growth. While conceding that "there is definitely something to this" (an example of the spurious evenhandedness to which I will return), Reich feels that we have entered an age of "collective entrepreneurialism," one in which we need not be fearful that excessive taxation will reduce motivation or deprive entrepreneurs of the capital that their superior skill would most wisely direct to the best opportunities. Only by recognizing that collective entrepreneurialism has replaced the Triumphant Individual can we adopt policies that will induce managers to retrain employees for the complex tasks they now face, workers to abandon rigid work rules, and suppliers, creditors, and others to recognize the "permanent relationship" which exists between all parties in the productive process.

ONE need not disagree with Reich's statement that there are increasing economies of scale in research, and that increasing portions of research are being funded by the government (most particularly the Pentagon), to argue that the Triumphant Individual still plays an important, if not key role, in the American economic success of the Reagan years. Judging from the examples used in the

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book, Reich lives in a world of General Motors, steel companies, and other old constituents of trade union and Democratic Party power. But these are no longer the principal engines of economic progress. In the past few years, industries in which small businesses (with fewer than five hundred employees) have the preeminent role have added workers at twice the rate of industries dominated by large firms. This is not a new, Reagan-created phenomenon. A recent study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that between 1966 and 1976, 80 percent of new jobs were created by firms with fewer than one hundred employees, while other studies show that two-thirds of the new jobs were generated by firms with twenty or fewer employees.

Such a pronounced and enduring trend is difficult to dismiss: It stems from the replacement—more accurately, the supplementation—of industries requiring enormous investments and possessing substantial economies of scale, with high-tech sectors where one person's brain matters. This is not to say that mature economies will end up with no manufacturing base. More likely, that base will remain stable, or grow a bit in absolute terms while declining in relative importance. The producers of services and of high-tech products, from fast-food delivery, fast stock-order execution and floor sweeping, to programming and repairing computers have become the sources of economic growth. And individual genius in those sectors is no myth: Witness the triumph of creative, individual film makers over large studios in the recent voting for the Academy Awards.

In discussing the third myth, that of the "Benevolent Community," Reich is on somewhat firmer ground. He points out that a good part of what Americans consider their generosity and benevolence is no more than a series of transfer payments among groups within the middle class, with the poorer members of society benefiting much less.

Indeed, the casual reader might at times think he was reading Charles Murray's *Losing Ground*, rather than Reich's *Tales of a New America*. We have here a plea both for compassion and for individual responsibility. Unfortunately, when Reich gets to specific proposals, the ground on which he stands becomes shaky. He is for more liberal aid to dependent children, and he tries to meet Murray's objections by stating that "absent fathers would be required to pay a portion of their paychecks to support their offspring." How these irresponsible breeders would be found, and required to pay up, is left to the reader. Investments in prenatal care, preschool learning, and basic education would be increased, but disruptive or vandalizing students would somehow be partially or wholly "excluded" (note the reluctance to use the more specific "expelled").

Worse still, benevolence would be supplemented by social engineering of the type that has caused so much middle-class resentment of all welfare and entitlement programs: "in order to universalize our instruments of community," Reich would "disperse chronically

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poor Americans more widely among the rest of us . . . Small clusters of low-income housing should be built in high-income neighborhoods." Since the very rich can vote with their feet, and, as history proves, would flee such neighborhoods, the middle class would be left with all of the social problems that such programs inevitably generate. The nobility of Reich's sentiment fades when one thinks about the victims of such policies, and the low probability that these programs will significantly improve the lot of their intended beneficiaries.

FINALLY, Reich would have us abandon, as a myth, the notion that "rot at the top" is the cause of many of what he sees as the nation's problems. While at times the view that evil corporate profiteers or malevolent government officials create economic and social problems can be damaging—witness the policy effects of the belief, during the OPEC supply interruption, that oil companies were earning "obscene profits"—this suspicion of concentrated corporate and government power remains a healthy one, and one we should not discard lightly. It is one of the most useful checks we have on the power of both the private and public sectors, and is reflected both in our insistence on competition, as codified in the antitrust laws, and our retention of a system of checks and balances.

We should not only question Reich's classification of some of our beliefs as myths, but also be skeptical of the use of this analysis to wish a plague on both the liberal and conservative houses. The British have a debating technique which Reich must much admire. They first recite the opposing point of view and then, instead of meeting its arguments, state, "That said, . . ." and proceed to set forth their own opposed opinion. This leads the casual reader to believe he is in the hands of a fair-minded expositor, who has met the other side's arguments.

So with Professor Reich. For example, he concedes that the Strategic Defense Initiative will have profound technological and economic effects, and that the technology created will have commercial consequences more significant than the Manhattan Project or the Apollo moon program, and will help reduce our dependence on Japanese technology in integrated circuits, fiber optics, polymers, super computers, and the like. But then, "that said," and without disposing of these advantages, Reich concludes that the program will not have beneficial commercial effects because of noncompetitive and wasteful Pentagon procurement policies. Indeed, Reich uses the opportunity of his discussion of SDI to attack the "veil of secrecy" that the Pentagon casts over much of this research. Arguing that "few would contend" that the Soviets have had difficulty obtaining information about our latest weapons, he concludes that the success of Soviet espionage is a good thing for America: It makes it difficult for Russian scientists to gain valuable experience. And there is more: "Had we set out consciously to insure that the Soviets could never challenge our technological superiority, we could have

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come up with few better plans than to leak to them, steadily, our latest secrets."

This debating technique is supplemented with the aforementioned spurious evenhandedness, as in Reich's discussion of environmental control. Reich damns both free marketeers who, he says, argue that the costs of enforcing the Clean Air Act far exceed its benefits, and environmentalists who insisted on a variety of controls which proved, in the end, to be less than optimally efficient. But this is not what happened in the debate over environmental controls, in which this reviewer was involved. Environmental groups argued against the use of cost-benefit analysis on the ground that it is impossible to value a human life, or a hiking experience, while the business community urged that control techniques with the highest ratio of benefits to costs be adopted in such diverse areas as air-quality control, automobile bumper regulations, and nuclear plant safety. In short, Reich's condemnation of both sides in this debate for their alleged failure to explore economically efficient means of achieving a given goal is unfair: The obloquy should be reserved for the liberals.

IT is not that government regulators are evil, and businessmen latent do-gooders, ever alert to prevent environmental degradation. Rather, these groups march to the tune of different drummers. Businessmen, confronted with a new regulation, are under substantial pressure to define and meet it in the least-costly, i.e., most efficient, manner. Regulators, on the other hand, are best served—insulated from criticism by Congress and organized consumer groups—by a zero-risk approach. This means the development of environmental standards that give no weight to the relationship between the cost of achieving those goals and the benefits to be derived from that exercise. Hence we have ozone standards that could, if enforced, bring economic activity in Los Angeles to a halt; a disinclination to accept low-cost techniques for complying with noise abatement standards (ear plugs); and standards for new drugs that doom many so as to avoid side effects in a few.

Reich is so eager to attack the probably correct view that government officials continually seek to expand their power that he ignores this simple fact: Power-hungry, risk-averse government officials will favor less efficient solutions to society's problems than will profit-hungry, cost-minimizing businessmen. And this has less to do with a "good guys, bad guys" dichotomy than with legitimate responses by both parties to the pressures under which they operate and the constituencies to which they respond.

So, too, with Reich's effort to blame burgeoning regulation equally on the business community and on liberal governments. And here we have an example of Reich's inattention to facts. He states that while the Reagan administration "did succeed in abandoning some regulatory efforts . . . it did nothing to change the *way* in which the remaining regulations were administered." Conse-

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quently, and notwithstanding the Reagan administration's efforts, "the *Code of Federal Regulations* continued to swell with detail, the *Federal Register* bulged with new interpretations and elaborations, and American business continued to writhe under the burden of pettifogging directives from Washington." Not so. During the Carter years the number of pages in the *Federal Register* rose from 65,604 to a 1980 peak of 87,012. By 1986, the Reagan administation had whittled this total to 47,418 pages—a good deal fewer "pettifogging directives" than American business faced under a liberal administration.

UNFORTUNATELY Reich has nothing new, in the end, to suggest. His plans to increase social spending are hornbook liberal teaching; his proposals for the encouragement of collective as opposed to individual entrepreneurship have deep roots in the anti-individualism that has long characterized liberal thought. And his quite sensible but probably doomed proposals for greater cooperation in international economic matters—he would have the Federal Reserve Board and the central banks of other countries coordinate their monetary and fiscal policies—have been preempted by Secretary of the Treasury Baker, just as his proposals to ease the transition of workers out of low-skilled businesses decimated by foreign competition have been preempted by President Reagan's February proposal to spend $980 million for this purpose.

That so inventive a policy planner as Reich has so little to offer is a pity, for the country does face some real economic problems. While we are in a record-breaking period of sustained growth, and are making progress in reducing our trade deficit, we have not figured out how to control impatient politicians. Leading politicians of all parties, with the honorable exceptions of Jack Kemp and the fallen Gary Hart, are clamoring for protectionist legislation—an apparent "quick fix." What legislative and institutional mechanisms can be devised to persuade impatient politicians to give economic forces sufficient time to work themselves out?

Also, our problems—and the world's—have been exacerbated by our inability to persuade our trading partners to reflate, so that their economies will grow faster and suck in more imports. Can mechanisms be devised for improved international coordination of domestic monetary and fiscal policies?

Reich undoubtedly could propose some interesting possible solutions to these problems. Unfortunately, he either felt those problems unworthy of his attention, or chose not to share his thoughts with his readers, to our loss.

But do read this book. If nothing else, it gets the juices flowing.

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The Spirit of Public Policy

DANIEL CASSE

Steven Kelman: **Making Public Policy: A Hopeful View of American Government.** *Basic Books. 332 pp. $19.95.*

GOVERNMENT has few friends these days. Over the past two decades, we are told, a "confidence gap" has developed between American citizens and the institutions that serve them. This lack of confidence goes far beyond the traditional distrust of government. To the most cynical observer of politics, government produces little more than waste, fraud, and abuse; politicians and civil servants are but mere bureaucrats seeking only their own advancement.

The noble goal of Steven Kelman's *Making Public Policy* is to save government from these cynics. Subtitled "A Hopeful View of Government," his book is a very rosy view of government indeed. In examining how a government makes policy, he finds not only that government *should* work but that it *does* work. He evaluates the process of policy making against two standards: the ability to produce good public policy; and the effect the process has in promoting the dignity and molding the character of the citizenry. The key to a successful government, explains Kelman, is "public spirit." And as he guides the reader through the institutions and mechanisms of the public-policy process, Kelman attempts to show that public spirit pervades the system, making the formation of good public policy a reasonable and attainable goal.

There are many who completely reject this description of government. "Public choice" theorists, for example, insist that all government officials are "budget maximizers"—politicians and bureaucrats who unhesitatingly spend public money because their own decisions and actions are motivated purely by self-interest. A growing amount of evidence for this theory (in the form of pork-barrel legislation and bloated bureaucracies) has lifted it outside the schools of public choice economics so that today many citizens and politicians believe that self-interest is indeed the strongest motivation in government.

The debate over what role self-interest plays in the affairs of men is, of course, an old one. The Founders believed that self-interest was so powerful a force that it had to be a central concern in creating an American government. But today their vision finds critics on both the right, who say that it does not promote virtue, and on the left, who say that powerful special interests undermine democracy. Kelman has a different view, however. He insists that the self-interest view of politics misrepresents the true character of American public life. Much of his book is thus an implicit—and often explicit—assault on the public choice theory of government. He argues that by observing the political behavior of most citizens

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and government employees, we find that they are in fact public spirited and genuinely concerned for the well-being of others. They see government as neither an intrusive force nor a vehicle for personal gain; rather, public life is perceived by the average citizen to be the most appropriate forum in which to display concern for others. Hence, Kelman concludes that the "role government plays in our lives is more worthy of admiration and faith than of dislike and cynicism."

MAKING PUBLIC POLICY is divided into two parts. The first describes how policy is made by examining the institutional settings for politics: the Congress, the Presidency, the Supreme Court, the bureaucracy, and the civil service. It provides an informative survey of how each of these functions and what role they play in developing, implementing, and enforcing policy. But it is the second part that contains the heart of Kelman's thesis about public spirit and public policy. Here he defines the goals of policy making and evaluates how well the policy-making process works against his two standards, producing good policy and molding character.

The first standard immediately presents us with a problem: Few agree on what "good" public policy is. Kelman responds that the quality of policy can be measured by the amount of public spirit in the process of devising and carrying it out. But "public spirit" is just as slippery a term as "good public policy"—and Kelman's definition does little to help us. "Public spirit," he writes, "is an inclination to make an honest effort to achieve good public policy." And he adds: "When people try to achieve good public policy, the result tends to *be* good public policy." This seems to be a rather simple recipe for effective government. And it is made even simpler by Kelman's insistence on seeing public spirit everywhere—in the activities of a big bureaucracy, in the ideological decisions of the Supreme Court, and in the drafting of pollution-control legislation.

What we have here is a very watered-down notion of public spirit that seems designed not so much to describe American government as to argue against the self-interest model of it. Thus, for the purpose of his argument, Kelman quickly labels any behavior that is not purely an expression of self-interest as "public spiritedness." His case for this kind of public spirit is further weakened by his appeal to scientific evidence. He relies on psychological and genetic studies that demonstrate the existence of an involuntary altruism in human behavior, which is to say that people experience empathy and display concern for others. This fact about human behavior seems beyond dispute. But it is not a proof of public spiritedness, only evidence that man is a compassionate animal. What we learn, though, is that when Kelman talks about public spirit, he really means old-fashioned liberal compassion.

Kelman uses this compassion to expose the shortcomings of the often cold-hearted arguments made in favor of the self-interest posi-

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tion. But he has created an easy target for himself by criticizing only the most dogmatic public choice theorists. He never seriously considers the broader understanding of self-interest, what Tocqueville called "self-interest properly understood." Tocqueville certainly questioned how much self-interest could explain American public behavior. Yet he could not deny the positive effect of self-interest properly understood, which "if it does not lead directly to virtue, establishes habits which turn it that way."

Nonetheless, Kelman's criticism of the role of self-interest in political life is unrelenting. He is particularly critical of Madison's formula for government, since it makes any government action difficult. Preventing government from easily using its power was, of course, the Founders' purpose, but to Kelman it is a troublesome formula for policy making. "Madisonian institutions, absent public spirit," he writes, "fail the test of the tendency to produce good public policy." In this Kelman sounds very much like "those considerate and virtuous citizens" described in *Federalist* No. 10, who complain that the public good is disregarded in the conflicts of rival parties. But like these men, Kelman underestimates the threat to a republic that stems from the "mischiefs of faction." Factions, Madison tells us, are not simply products of self-interest but arise from the "zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning Government, and many other points." By contrast, in Kelman's description of government, different opinions seem but a minor obstacle to policy making: "Public spirited individuals can, of course, disagree about what indeed constitutes good public policy . . . What occurs is a marketplace of ideas. Ideas jostle, and out of the jostling truth has a better chance of emerging." Certainly Kelman is correct that any deliberation over policy involves an exchange of ideas. But to suggest that by merely "jostling," the best ideas—not to mention the truth—will emerge flys in the face of what we know about the role of ideology in politics. Policy debates about the most crucial issues, such as welfare, strategic defense, or foreign aid, are at heart rarely quarrels over the implementation of a policy but more often expressions of profound differences on various policy ideas. Today there is hardly ever a policy dispute that, for better or worse, is not affected by this kind of ideological battle.

Kelman terms such disputes "jousting among advocates," which suggests a certain chivalry among Washington's political combatants. Indeed, the life of politics he describes often sounds as if it takes place in a graduate seminar rather than in crowded congressional corridors. But even if politicians were the rational and disinterested gentlemen that Kelman seems to suggest, he forgets that even the most prudent and well-meaning government officials are capable of proposing disastrous policies. Kelman, though, insists that good intentions should suffice. Bad policy, he explains, is created when "a mistake is made about the best means to achieve the ends that are sought." True, most policies fail because of the way

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they are carried out. But Kelman places far too much faith in the good intentions of government policy. He never seems to recognize that, good intentions notwithstanding, there are limits to government action beyond which new policies and programs do more harm than good. What is difficult, James Q. Wilson has observed, is not getting government to start doing things but getting government to stop. The past twenty years of public policy should have taught us that there are certain policy problems—particularly in the areas of welfare and crime—that no amount of tinkering with the process will remedy.

KELMAN does, in a way, address this problem through his second standard for good public policy: Does the process of making public policy itself promote our dignity and character? Although this question introduces the most interesting part of Kelman's argument, it is also the most controversial. We have become so inured to the cost-benefit analyses of government policies that any suggestion that government should promote ethical behavior is likely to be branded as an attempt to "legislate morality." But as Kelman points out, there should be nothing objectionable in a government's attempt to make a statement about what values and what kind of behavior it would like to promote. Benefits to veterans, for example, while costly, make a statement to the effect that we as a society honor those who have served our country. Similarly, Medicare and other benefits for the elderly speak of the commitment to maintaining the well-being of our oldest citizens. Moreover, Kelman shows that organizations that make an effort to inculcate certain values of personal responsibility and provide work incentives for their employees usually get the best results in performance. There is no dispute over this kind of character-molding.

But the character-and-policy argument becomes problematic when it must confront the issues on which there is much disagreement: education, welfare, gun control, prison reform, abortion, homosexuality, and so on. Here even the truly public-spirited politician is likely to find instilling character very difficult, especially when the individuals involved insist that they have a right to behave any way they want, no matter what the cost to society. Thus, whenever government tries to attach values to policies (or, on the other hand, creates policies that are value free) in sensitive areas, we see the endless battles of faction that James Madison predicted.

This is not to suggest that society shouldn't have anything to say about the character and values of its members. On the contrary, the character of its citizenry is the paramount concern of society. But in a large and diverse republic such as the United States there are much more successful vehicles than government for promoting character: education, family, the arts, and, most importantly, religion. Indeed, schools, churches, and community leaders once saw the promotion of good citizenship as their principle task. But in recent

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years, as these institutions and their leaders abdicated their roles as "character-builders," students of policy such as Kelman have hastily concluded that government should take up the slack.

There are, of course, many good things to be said about trying to imbue public policy with lessons in right actions. But the fact that Kelman can only provide a few examples of such policy, and how it might effect dignity and character, suggests that character-oriented policy is more elusive than he may realize. Declaring a commitment to public spirit is easy. But reversing the damage done by years of policy that was indifferent toward individual behavior may require the kind of intrusive role for government that no American public wants or is willing to endure.

Nevertheless, there may still be reason for optimism. The appearance of *Making Public Policy* signals a retreat from the overly quantitative, economic, policy science that has dominated so much of contemporary thought about how government works, and marks a return to the older concerns of virtue, character, and right action. But the book is marred by a faith in government that, at times, seems unshakeable. Indeed, skepticism about the ability of government to do good—perhaps *the* defining characteristic of American politics—is the missing ingredient in Kelman's formula for good policy. Without it, his book provides not so much a hopeful view of government as a hopelessly romantic one.

Daniel Casse is managing editor of The Public Interest.

The Idea of a University

ANDREW SULLIVAN

Allan Bloom: **The Closing of the American Mind.** *Simon and Schuster. 432 pp. $18.95.*

Derek Bok: **Higher Learning.** *Harvard University Press. 208 pp. $15.00.*

Howard R. Bowen and Jack H. Schuster: **American Professors: A National Resource Imperiled.** *Oxford University Press. 304 pp. $24.95.*

Ernest Boyer: **College.** *Harper and Row. 368 pp. $19.95.*

SANCTIMONY and banality seem to be hard to avoid in the great education debate. In his report on the state of higher education, sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation, Ernest Boyer ends with the wish that "students must be inspired by a larger vision, using the

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knowledge they have acquired to discover patterns, form values, and advance the common good." The rhetorical world is one where visions are constantly enlarging, complexity is always interdependent, and caring communities can yet embrace the individual. But the overwritten perorations suggest at the same time that there is a growing sense of the seriousness of the issues, if little hope of a way through them. There is a sustained and clumsy grappling for what Cardinal Newman called "the idea" of a university. It rarely amounts to more than a sanctimonious grope into the dark.

Professors Bowen and Schuster provide graphs to help. They argue in *American Professors: A National Resource Imperiled* that the answer to the university's dilemma is to play the job market more successfully. Working as a professor is less attractive than it was: The next generation of academics are being squeezed out by falling rolls, by declining salaries, and by an over-preponderant older generation. All these assertions are accompanied by a mass of statistics.

And "accompanied" rather than supported is the appropriate word. The evidence works systematically against the conclusions. Professors are largely content with the status quo: "on the basis of our several hundred interviews . . . professorial life is still, on balance, attractive to its practitioners" who "testified to a genuine, deep-seated love of teaching and research that was inspiring to us." Faculty morale has not changed substantially over the last five or ten years and although public esteem for them has halved, this is in line with the decline for the military, the Congress, major companies and doctors. Although by 1979 only 18.2 percent of Rhodes scholars were choosing academic careers (against some 47.6 percent in 1949), by far the most precipitate decline came in the 1960s, reputedly the most affluent and energetic time on campuses. The rate has largely stabilized since.

These findings do not negate the fact that tenure decisions are likely to be tough for junior academics for the time being, just when other professions are increasing their allure. But even here, the figures suggest that "crisis" is an overblown description. The quality of graduate students, according to the report, is higher than ever: 82 percent of leading graduate departments report their graduate students to be the same or much better than ten years ago, and compared to European universities, the situation is little less than idyllic.

Bowen and Schuster's recommendation to increase government money for faculty recruitment sounds in this climate like special pleading. But the more sensible proposals, such as loosening up tenure to provide openings to otherwise stalled junior faculty may well be necessary to ease the logjam of the present generation. "Imperiled," however, is obviously pushing it.

But the most objectionable part of Bowen and Schuster's argument is its concentration on the interest of the teachers, rather than the taught. At one point they admit that "some great scientists and scholars do engage in undergraduate instruction with profit and

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pleasure to themselves and to their students and this is a practice which on a moderate scale could be encouraged." This is an argument which on a moderate scale could be encouraged.

THE strength of Ernest Boyer's study, in contrast, is its concentration on the view from the students. He carefully and imaginatively outlines sensible reforms: greater information and contact between high school and college to facilitate better placement and fewer educational lacunae; more faculty advising for students on campus; more concentration on orientation and greater concern for remedial English, stretching even to university programs in local high schools; more help for teachers in improving their teaching methods, and more reliable measures of assessment both within and across colleges. He provides model examples, too. And refreshingly, his agenda arises from direct questions which students ask and rarely get answered.

And yet once the evident practical, administrative case ends, there is a nervousness and vagueness for what Boyer knows to be the greater issue. Having tidied up the vestments, and arranged the weekly bulletin, he comes to discussing Church doctrine, and here it is that the sureness of touch wavers.

There is a little desperation, for example, in some of the solutions to faculty professionalization. He points to a discrepancy between the faculty's desire to teach and professional compulsion to research, between their isolation and their "yearning for community," and yet offers solutions which have the smack of bureaucratic expediency. "Changing fragmentary departmental structures," instituting Distinguished Teaching Professor posts, and "workshops" for department leadership sound like sips of brandy for dying vocations.

Boyer's visionary recourse is to the idea of "community," beyond administrative detail. But along with almost all contemporary references to "community," there is revealingly little said of its content. There is no description of the good for which such a community might aim. Rather what is required is "commitment," a term loosely associated with "community service." For want of any higher good, or any structure of goods within which students might order their lives, Boyer, like the bishop who daringly declared himself against sin, suggests altruism. Altruism in its purest (and blandest) sense is the new—even the only—virtue.

Openness is its complement. The "open university" (as Harvard's shanty town ironically called itself) is the new aim, and Boyer argues strenuously for opening the university up, to part-time students, older students, even nonstudents for a greater "diversity." Boyer even gives the traditional university the name of "youth ghetto." Travel is another feature of the modern university, and years' abroad are uncritically encouraged. He eventually asks: "Is it possible that in the twenty-first century the undergraduate who enrolls in an American college will view the world as the campus?"

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The benefits and virtue of community service are not in doubt, and Boyer rightly sees it as one of the brightest spots in an otherwise spiritually impoverished campus. But he shows no worry about what is lost in the process of opening the university to the world. There is little sense of how a small, even self-centered "youth ghetto" can provide inspiration, direction and nourishment to those chosen for it. There is no understanding that community and openness may be antagonistic, nor that commitment to narrow and necessarily exclusive forms of excellence might be rewarding for the few who will in later life never have the opportunity for them again. Nor, more importantly, how such withdrawal may be essential for individuals to understand, for a while, the reasons for pursuing one life over another, which lie at the core of a sustained life of service. Boyer reveals only uncritical glee that the university, under democratic pressure, has to resemble more and more the world which sustains it. Yet this erosion of identity, already under way, may have a lot to do with the "yearning for community" he detects.

Boyer's concerns find a sympathetic audience with Derek Bok, the president of Harvard University. Bok's vision of a university is one seamless and reasonable committee presiding over the extension of knowledge and progress. He is not complacent, however. His solution to apparent moral drift, for example, is to set up "ethics courses," especially in the professional schools. He is careful, however, not to stipulate the point or the content of such ethics. They can merely "help students to recognize moral dilemmas when they arise, expose them to the best writings on the subject, and teach them to seek ethical means to accomplish their ends." The result is "normally sensitive, conscientious students." It may be ironic that the great struggles of ethical conduct, the foundations of morality, the questions of right and wrong, are now covered with an elective course at the business school. But anything stronger is beyond the scope of modern education. As Bok puts it, "many faculty members may inwardly wonder whether they have found enough meaning in their own lives to qualify them to discuss such issues with their students."

This honesty is refreshing, and the strength and interest of Bok's argument is that he knows his university and his time. He is not unaware of the "problem of belief" for modern students, but largely welcomes it: "These trends are not without benefits. They have brought a richer profusion of lifestyles, a reconsideration of tired dogmas, and a public less likely to believe whatever it is told." The correct response to any problem is an emphasis on more active discussion and Socratic teaching: the development of tutorial responsibility or "moral reasoning" in the core curriculum.

THE practical wisdom of Bok's pragmatism reflects the necessary tightrope he has to walk as president of Harvard. He does not have the autonomy to act as iconoclast or radical. Yet his worries about students' selfishness suggest the drawbacks of such modera-

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tion *in extremis*: There are "declines in prejudice, dogmatism, authoritarianism, and ethnocentrism. At the same time, there is no indication that college has had much success in increasing kindness, sympathy, altruism, or friendliness toward others." Anyone who has taught in the contemporary university can see exactly what he means. Teaching a core course in "moral reasoning" to freshmen is no substitute for the moral leadership they are seeking. Most often it is an exercise in the philosophic winnowing of any moral capacity at all. The ensuing skepticism and cynicism leaves a moral void for selfishness to fill.

Bok's approach to the core curriculum reflects this dilemma. He has to avoid any strong Western ethnocentric bias or any value-laden teaching, and yet address the moral questions which students still ask, and will always ask. The result is necessarily a disorienting and unfocused mix of mere disciplines, or "approaches to learning." But learning *what*?

Boyer suggests the learning of types of thought. He suggests language, art, heritage, nature, work, institutions and so on, until we arrive at: "Identity: the search for meaning." Most of the others, unfortunately, are as excruciating:

> Art: The Esthetic Dimension. There are human experiences that defy the power of words to describe them. To express our most intimate, most profoundly moving feelings and ideas we use a more sensitive, more subtle language we call the arts.

It is difficult to know whether this profundity is a way to escape specialized irrelevance or to immerse oneself into an even treaclier, homogenized version. I am reminded of a student who took a course on India for his foreign culture "core" and received a C+ having taken the mid-term and the final while stoned. He claimed to be expressing a mode of thought inspired by a foreign culture. Such is the thinly veiled contempt reserved by smart students for a core so nervous of content, so wary of a value-laden coherence, that it lapses into shallowness.

But this common critique of what Secretary of Education William Bennett described as "core-lite" has to face the fact of a complete lack of consensus for anything stronger. This is not an accident, or the result of mere funk, but the result of something deeper within the increasing complexity and fragmentation of academic life. It is easy to ridicule the results. A core curriculum, such as Harvard's, which can amount to a list of courses such as The United States and the Conquest of the Great White Plague 1842–1952, Contemporary French Culture (including Asterix and Tintin), Beast Literature, Jesus and the Moral Life, and the Composition of the Atmosphere, is hardly more than a melange of, at best, methodology or the historiography of various disciplines. Cynicism or shallow inquisitiveness are the most common responses. But outright rebellion, by both faculty and students, might greet anything more ideologically or culturally loaded.

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But this impasse may not be as practically intractable as it seems. Bok's understanding of the unfeasibility of a simple great books program is well taken, but the content of the methodologies could easily be reworked to concentrate more fruitfully on the most worthwhile and eternal texts. To some extent, this already happens: Courses on Shakespeare and Aristotle do remarkably well in their respective methodologies, but more guidance toward them and away from Asterix, Tintin, and the semiotics of advertising would hardly be beyond faculty persuasion. The alternative, which is to return to a European system that assumes greater maturity on the part of students, expands extracurricular activities to absorb the general education function and lets young scholars increase their expertise in particular areas at the great expense of others, requires too much advanced training and is too elitist for Americans to contemplate. Its complete absence from any of these books is a sign, however, of a worrying parochialism in the American academy.

ALLAN BLOOM'S book, however, could hardly be termed parochial. In so far as it purports to be about education, it takes its writ with a large amount of license. While ostensibly about university education, it is in fact a work about universal things. In this way, it manages to encompass Bok's nervousness about coherence and Boyer's platitudes about community and commitment, and go beyond them. The university, as its name suggests, is the home for just this sort of intellectual license, the "little wall," under which in Plato's *Republic*, the philosopher cowers "like a man in a storm when dust and rain are blown about by the wind." Bloom's analysis is both of the wind, dust, and rain, as well as the possibility of the little wall.

It begins with the dust and the rain, or rather the students. Bloom fleshes out a picture already hinted at by Boyer and Bok, but, unlike them, he is unafraid to talk about the malaise in terms of students' souls. Today's students have passed through the family with little, if any, intimation of higher goods than the prevailing opinions of their time and place. The truths of religion are unknown to them or known simply as cultural artifacts of historical interest. Literature is a mere diversion, part of the accumulation of a "culture," which has no direct reference to the way they live their lives. Philosophy is a distant and irrelevant abstraction.

Yet they come to university "sophisticated," adept at manipulating arguments that hardly affect their lives, pursuing career paths for existences in which the great questions of life, death, and eternity are less important than the variety of credit cards they will surely soon have. "In a condition like that of the first men in the state of nature—spiritually unclad, unconnected, isolated, with no inherent or unconditional connection with anything or anyone. They can be anyone they want to be, but they have no particular desire to be anything in particular." Or as Cardinal Newman put it, "Nothing has a drift or a relation; nothing has a history or a promise. Every-

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thing stands by itself and comes and goes in its turn, like the shifting scenes of a show, which leaves the spectator where he was."

This striking conviction leads, however, to caricature. It is hardly true that students "usually do not, in what were once called love affairs, say, 'I love you,' and never, 'I'll always love you.'" Although Bloom's account of the roommates' relationship "with sex and utilities included in the rent," rings true for some, it would be a hard and terrible judgment—and one of an apocalyptic historicism somewhat awkward in Bloom's thought—to believe that all seriousness of passion is dead. Marriage is still a serious objective for most students I know and have known, and the matter-of-factness, even wariness, distinctive of a curiously unenchanted generation may spring more from the knowledge of broken homes than from the inertia of dead souls.

Rock music, which Bloom rails against in one of the least insightful and uncharacteristically reactionary parts of the book, hardly merits the statement, "nothing noble, sublime, profound, delicate, tasteful or even decent can find a place in such tableaux." In many instances, it is a product of exactly the "eros" that Bloom sees as essential to the development of the philosophic temperament. It need not always be a crude simulation of sex. The stumbling pseudoprofundity of its lyrics, the mix of exhilaration and desire it can invoke and the surreal dreams of the video-world all suggest that the soul is still longing, if it has not found yet a suitable resting place. The answer is not to condemn, but to understand it, and it is a rare aberration that Bloom cannot see this. He obviously hasn't listened to much of it.

BUT these are quibbles, and the general picture convinces. The loss of direction, incipient unhappiness and pervasive shallowness of undergraduate life are persuasively set out. And they are described with none of the cautious balancing of Bok or Boyer. Here again, the analogy with Newman is revealing. The problem is less the closing of the American mind, than the impoverishment of the American soul, and Bloom's passion is fired by a moving—even inspiring—concern for its possibilities. He is particularly committed to the souls of the young, and exudes a grief at their loss of direction. One gets a sense in this book of the urgency with which he obviously teaches. He talks of

> this powerful tension, this literal lust for knowledge [that] a teacher could see in the eyes of those who flattered him by giving such evidence of their need for him. His own satisfaction was promised by having something with which to feed their hunger, an overflow to bestow on their emptiness. His joy was in hearing the ecstatic "Oh, yes!" as he dished up Shakespeare and Hegel to minister to their need. Pimp and midwife really described him well.

Sex—or rather "eros"—is central to this task, as Plato and Rousseau both knew, and as the somewhat camp tones of Bloom's book

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affirm. He puts it revealingly in his discussion of his own education: "It was hard to tell whether the meaning of it all was that I was about to lose my virginity or to penetrate the mysteries of being. An admirable confusion." It is a risk, and one which many teachers, terrified of such intimate involvement, recoil from in legitimate fear. But Bloom attempts to persuade us that teaching necessarily includes such dangers, or risks becoming a mere diversion, failing to address the most significant or meaningful questions. But traditional didactic distance is squeezed worryingly in the process.

For this reason, there is something perturbing about the stakes of the engagement—and not merely on the grounds of its overtly erotic tendencies. For Bloom the teacher becomes almost a priest, necessary to guide, implicated in the very being of the person who asks, "I am a whole human being. Help me to form myself in my wholeness and let me develop my real potential." But unlike the priest, he can neither absolve, nor provide any sacrament but the initiation into a tradition of the serious life. For the ancients, perhaps, this was an initiation naturally sweet. But for modern students as rootless and as undirected as Bloom paints them, it can have a profound, even frightening, impact.

The intensity of this demand may go some way to explaining why Bloom's Socratic quest is not as popular or self-evident in universities as he claims it ought to be. But according to Bloom, the real reason is the belief among teachers that there are no truths to be found. The fact-value distinction, stemming from Nietzsche, popularized by Weber, and developed by Heidegger, has largely ended the rational debate about which values might be true, a debate that once came close to defining the educational process.

The fact-value distinction is thus the reason for the increasing alienation of one discipline from another, the complete isolation of natural science from the social sciences and the humanities, and the turning of the humanities into a cultural version of cable television. The reason has gone, the purpose broken. Nietzsche did it.

This somewhat over-simplified but penetrating reading of Modernity also provides the reason for the inability of the universities to defend free speech against violence, since in a world where values are relative, activism presents an unanswerable alternative to thought. Bloom's brilliant understanding of the Nietzscheanization of the left, its abandonment of science, its demand for values without oppression, and its emergent doctrine of the necessity for movement (*Die Bewegung*, as the young Nazis called it) as a substitute for rational Marxist progress reveals that the activist problem in the universities—now and in the sixties—is not just a question of funk on the part of the authorities. It is a question of whether the universities have any coherent answer to the fundamental attack on rationalism now accepted by almost everyone teaching in the academy. To paraphrase Alasdair Macintyre, it is not that the barbarians are at the gates, it is that they have been running us for several

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decades now. It is no wonder they open the doors when their friends start a siege.

BUT the strength of the book is that it avoids a reactionary tendency to abnegate responsibility for Modernity or to flee from it. It is not a polemic against Nietzsche or the roots of the crisis of reason. Rather it is a call to take that crisis seriously, and recognize that it represents a major threat to the idea of a university as understood in the West. Nihilism is a respectable—one senses almost an attractive—philosophical option for Bloom. His worry is that it has become merely a *prejudice* among those unaware of its full political and philosophical consequences. And one of those consequences must necessarily be an undermining of the Enlightenment reconciliation of nature and reason embedded in the American experiment. Bloom's warning, then, is not an ill thought out dismissal of philosophic nihilism, but a rallying cry against practical nihilism, American-style: unmeditated, uncontested and yet fatally corrosive.

The way to challenge this complacency lies in the university, since it alone is the little wall under which philosophy can address these fundamental questions in the West. And yet the university itself is the place where these prejudices are most thoroughly entrenched. In this way, Bloom captures the paradox of the contemporary university: It is both the disease and only cure for Western culture.

The cure lies in the modest attempt to retain, even in muted form, the philosophic life at the center of the university. Bloom has a confidence that philosophy cannot die, and that the only obstacle is a refusal to open the mind to the arguments of timeless thinkers. Historicism and relativism are the major obstacles to this endeavor, because they literally shut off vast areas of learning and stimulus from contemporary investigation. They are the valium of the inquiring mind. To counteract them, Bloom suggests resuscitating a core curriculum of great books, but in a way that does not treat them merely as authorities. Rather Bloom echoes Hobbes' antipathy to schoolmen by pointing to the radicalness of philosophy's alienation from all authorities save reason alone. The books stimulate the quest; they don't end it.

Here, of course, the paradox of university as disease comes into play. How can such a renewed program of learning be revived within the present climate? How can the faculty resistance to "ethnocentrism" and "traditionalism" be overcome? There is a missing link here, filled only, one imagines, by an inspiring example. This presumably is what this book is intended to provide. By being itself an advertisement for the stimulation and energy that encountering great texts generates, it might attract students back to the great and unifying questions, who might in turn drag new faculty with them. There is certainly some evidence that this is the most sensible and unanswerable strategy for the revival of the university. Where polemics fail, example can succeed. As Harvey Mansfield remarked, part of Bloom's response has been to turn himself into a book.

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As an exemplum, it works. It casts a searing light into our souls and makes them long again. That is why Bloom's book merits comparison with Newman's *The Idea of a University Defined*, since they are both advertisements not for arguments, but for ways of life that answer our deepest needs. In articulating that, Bloom has resurrected an understanding of what a university *means*, which goes far beyond what a university does, or what it fails to do.

But its esoteric message points beyond this. It is Bloom's parting comment (before the perhaps weary call to battle) that "one should never forget that Socrates was not a professor, that he was put to death, and that the love of wisdom survived, partly because of his individual example. This is what really counts, and we must remember it in order to know how to defend the university." Amid the platitudinous practicality of the current debate, it is both a sobering and ennobling reminder.

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In the Shadow of Immigration Policy

PETER SKERRY

***Edwin Harwood:* In Liberty's Shadow: Illegal Aliens & Immigration Law Enforcement.** *Hoover Institution Press. 250 pp. $25.95.*

IN THE continuing controversy over efforts to restrict immigration, much of the debate has focused on charges that sanctions on the hiring of illegal aliens will cause employers to discriminate against foreign-looking workers in order to avoid breaking the law. By raising this concern, opponents of immigration restriction have gained the ear of sympathetic liberals, as well as much attention from the media. Their efforts go a long way toward explaining why immigration legislation has been delayed for years and at various points almost killed—though employer sanctions were eventually included in the recently enacted Immigration Reform and Control Act.

Quite aside from the substantive merits of the discrimination charge, the bill's success was a remarkable achievement. After all, opinion polls have shown that a substantial segment, perhaps even a majority, of Mexican Americans support sanctions. The credit for impeding and weakening their implementation must in large measure go to Mexican-American political and legal activists. Long gone, of course, are the old-style machine politicians who once spoke for immigrant communities. That vacuum has now been partially filled by organizations like the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. Such a group has much stronger ties to corporate

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and foundation sponsors than to the people it claims to represent. It has therefore been able to play a catalytic role in the opposition to immigration restriction. These unelected leaders have been abetted by Mexican-American politicians who know that illegal aliens cannot vote, but do get counted when grants are calculated or district lines redrawn. For example, the Census Bureau estimates that, due to the illegals counted in the 1980 Census, California now has one extra seat in the House of Representatives.

Though such developments are by no means its primary focus, they do figure importantly in *In Liberty's Shadow*, a thoughtful organizational analysis of the Immigration and Naturalization Service's enforcement efforts. Drawing on his extensive field observations and interviews conducted under the auspices of the Hoover Institution, the sociologist Edwin Harwood depicts an agency charged with the vital yet delicate task of not only keeping illegal entrants out, but also of removing them from our democratic social fabric once they are in. To accomplish this, the INS has necessarily relied on considerable administrative discretion and myriad procedural shortcuts. For example, the crush of illegal entries has grown so great that, to avoid the expense of formal deportation hearings, the INS now depends on the voluntary departure of the vast majority of the fraction of illegals from Mexico it manages to apprehend. The irony is that such procedures make the agency dependent on the cooperation of those it detains. And according to the INS agents Harwood talked to, detainees are much less cooperative than they were even a few years ago.

Similarly, Harwood identifies the increased role of Mexican-American activists in constraining agency prerogatives. Not only have activists succeeded in curtailing the scope and method of INS searches in *barrio* neighborhoods, but aliens' rights advocates have also gotten the courts to impose burdensome procedural requirements on an already strained agency.

Yet Harwood makes clear that these are hardly the worst problems confronting the INS. He describes the agency as caught between the contradictory tasks of servicing legal entrants—issuing travel documents, immigration visas, and naturalization papers—and enforcing the law against illegal entrants. (The author does not say so, but this service function is one reason why the INS used to be in the Department of Labor.) Most problematic for the agency is the enforcement of unpopular laws against those violators who are not viewed as criminals either by themselves, by most Americans, or by most INS agents. As one agent puts it, "Immigration enforcement is like being in a football game without a home team." Harwood reveals how agents are ever mindful that U.S. Attorneys prefer prosecuting "serious criminals" apprehended by the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Agency. As a result, INS agents enforce the law selectively, stopping a raid when their van happens to be full, or not pursuing women likely to have children waiting at home.

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Echoing the arguments of many Mexican-American activists, Harwood acknowledges that too many interests (including, I might add, the activists themselves) have too much to gain to permit the flow of illegals to be significantly curtailed. This has been reflected through the years in the chronically low funding of the INS. And although budgets have increased dramatically in recent years, the author offers no reason to believe that the agency will ever solve its funding problems. Here again, Harwood points to the contradictory goals pushed onto the INS by a polity that remains ambivalent about border enforcement. He cites as typical a grower who refuses to cooperate with agents searching for illegals, but nonetheless calls them back the next day to report a troublesome employee.

THOUGH written before the enactment of recent immigration legislation, Harwood's analysis is timely. He is skeptical about employer sanctions. Even with secure identification procedures, sanctions are likely to falter because of strained resources and selective enforcement. Again, Harwood correctly emphasizes the fundamental lack of political will on this provision. He argues that without secure identification procedures, employers can legally hire anyone who presents documents that *appear* valid. Since the employer sanctions recently put into effect merely require existing documents (driver's licenses, birth certificates, social security cards) that are easily counterfeited, fraud will be prevalent. Indeed, on the day that the legislation finally passed, Senator Alan Simpson, its primary sponsor and long-time advocate of secure identification, observed that "document fraud is already a cottage industry in America."

As for amnesty, the other major provision of the new law, Harwood is equally pessimistic. Again there is the problem of easily falsified documents, as well as the lack of incentives for the INS to expend scarce resources to ferret out fraudulent claims. The INS is getting help processing amnesty claims from organizations like the Catholic Church. Since such intermediaries typically have self-interested reasons to maximize the number of legal aliens, the likelihood of false claims going undetected is even greater than depicted.

Harwood points to yet another disturbing possibility. Given the ease of making fraudulent amnesty claims and the chance of working while such claims are pending, many apprehended illegals will likely refuse voluntary return to Mexico and, aided and encouraged by aliens' rights activists, will increasingly demand formal hearings. The agency will have to set bonds low enough for those awaiting hearings so as not to overwhelm the detention facilities. And once out on bond, such amnesty applicants can re-enter the workforce, play out their appeals, and then go underground.

Having sketched the dilemmas facing the INS under pre- and post-reform scenarios, Harwood concludes by urging that the agency de-emphasize criminal enforcement in favor of a regulatory approach. Specifically, he proposes a guest-worker program with

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participants paying fees set low enough to compete with the costs of illegal entry. Harwood also proposes visa bonds to be forfeited by aliens (for example, students and visitors) who violate the terms of their stay. Such an approach would mean, in effect, abandoning efforts to stanch the flow of illegal aliens into this country. But not completely—for freed from the tasks of pursuing status violators and fortified with proceeds from the "user and abuser fees," the INS could then focus its resources on such clearly criminal activities as, for example, organized smuggling and fraud rings.

Reflecting his finding that INS agents are frustrated in their desire to pursue cases that seriously harm society, Harwood's proposal has the virtue of accepting the tensions inherent in the INS's mission without succumbing to the facile remedy of bureaucratic reorganization. He similarly accepts the reality that such tensions will inevitably result in severely strained resources, and then proposes a new source of funding more insulated from the ambivalence of congressional overseers.

YET these proposals have serious shortcomings. Most fundamentally, the fee system smacks too much of mortgaging off our national sovereignty. Harwood acknowledges that not all immigration dilemmas can be solved by such market schemes. But he underestimates the degree of public outrage likely to be stirred by any outright acknowledgement that we can only regulate, not control, our borders. Harwood is certainly correct in arguing that substantial decriminalization of our border enforcement conforms to prevailing public sentiment and behavior; and by implication, that it would be more successful than, say, similar efforts with drugs. Nevertheless, there are numerous institutional interests that would not tolerate various schemes to formalize the present flood of aliens. Foremost among these would be labor unions, to say nothing of the activist groups Harwood highlights throughout his study. As occurred with the recent reform effort, a coalition of such forces would certainly defeat any guest-worker proposals.

With the recent passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and the implementation of amnesty and employer sanctions, all such proposals are moot, at least for the present. Harwood's analysis suggests that the likely scenario now will be minimal enforcement and, barring any economic or political catastrophies that might turn Americans definitively against illegals, continuation of the present influx. The dispassionate and careful analysis presented in this book will help move us beyond the tired arguments of the last few years' debate. Moreover, by demonstrating the extreme vulnerability of border-enforcement efforts to the actions both of aliens and of their largely self-appointed spokesmen, *In Liberty's Shadow* also provides some fresh insights into what will clearly continue to be a matter of fundamental national concern.

Peter Skerry is completing a book on Mexican-American politics.

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When Tenants Go to War

LOUIS WINNICK

Ronald Lawson, Mark Naison, eds.: **The Tenant Movement in New York City, 1904-1984.** ***Rutgers University Press. Cloth $35.00, Paper $15.00.***

I DID NOT find in this brimming history of eighty years of tenant activism in New York City a memorable landlord joke of the 1930s:

> A harried Jewish owner was encircled by tenants shouting demands and waving picket signs. Asked by a bystander why he didn't settle, he replied, "Listen, dey vant new sinks, I'll gif dem new sinks. Dey vant a paintink, I'll gif dem a paintner. Dey vant a rent cut, I'll gif dem dat, too. But I'll be goddam if I'll free Tom Mooney."*

Lawson's book brings the jest back to life. What stands out in this account of the war between tenants and landlords is that the blood ran hot, deep—and red. The tenant protest movement was almost always the captive of radicals who coupled their ideological freight cars to the engine of renter discontent. Thus, in the 1900s tenant strikes were used by Socialist trade unions to organize the garment workers. In the 1930s they were transformed into puissant agitprop by the Communist Party. And in our own time, the manifestoes of tenant activism have often given as much play to Black Nationhood, Nicaragua, and Nuclear Freeze as to deficient maintenance and excessive rents. Readers of *The Tenant Movement in New York City* will have no doubt about where the authors stand in the endless strife between tenants and landlords—arguably the longest-running war on record. The book is a one-eyed view of an economic struggle, from the left. The contributors mute their partisanship, but no one will learn here the landlord's side of the story. That aside, the book illuminates a dark and fascinating corner of social history from which every houser will profit. For New York City buffs, the thirty-page picture section alone repays the purchase price.

The volume is divided into five chapters, each by a different author and each covering a major episode of tenant-landlord conflict. The editorial director is Ronald Lawson, an Australian social activist who immigrated to New York in 1971 and soon after associated himself with sundry tenant movements of the day.

The first episode reported occurred on the Lower East Side between 1904-1908, a conflict mainly between Jewish tenants and Jewish landlords. According to the chapter's author, Jenna W. Jose-

* For those to whom it is not memorable, Tom Mooney was a West Coast labor leader who was imprisoned from 1917 to 1939 for a bomb-throwing conviction. He was a symbolic martyr to American radicals, an icon of their graffiti scribes.

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lit, landlords had taken advantage of a tight housing market brought on by heavy migration to raise rents 20 to 30 percent. Grassroots in origin, the spreading protest was soon seized by the Socialist Party and, under its leadership, yoked to a broader agenda. The spark became a flame, bursting into the Great Rent Strike of 1908, the first known instance of mass rent-withholding. For all its turbulence, that strike was short-lived; judges of the day were quite prepared to evict without anguished soul-searching or undue delay. If the strike had no significant consequences for the housing market, it provided an instructive lesson to the left: Tenant anger is as malleable as worker anger and as readily beaten into a sword for the class struggle.

The next episode, narrated by Joseph Spencer, deals with the 1920s. Housing construction had ceased during World War I, creating a housing shortage exacerbated by high birth and marriage rates and resumed mass immigration. The inevitable result was a sharp rise in rents, again precipitating organized tenant protest and rent-withholding. But this strike differed from its predecessor in three respects. First, the prewar action had been confined to the Lower East Side. Now it fanned out to many parts of the city. Second, the tenants' allies were not only the Socialist left but the regular political machine as well. Legal aid was provided to tenants through the Democratic club houses, and Mayor Hylan appointed a Committee on Rent Profiteering. In 1920 the state legislature enacted the first rent-control laws, giving tenants substantial protection against arbitrary rent increases and evictions. Third, the issue of housing shortages entered the public-policy arena; a systematic effort began to use government aid to expand the housing supply. The Limited Dividend Act was passed providing property tax exemption as incentive for new housing. This Act, reinforced by a high level of general prosperity, led to an extraordinary building boom, one not equaled in the decades before or after. By 1928 a massive increase in the housing stock took the vacancy rate to 7.7 percent. Rent levels stabilized and many landlords were driven to concessions. In every respect this was a paradisiacal age for the renter—rising income, falling rents and an abundance of choice. Under these circumstances, tenant protest was extinguished despite frantic efforts by Socialist leaders to blow on the embers.

The third and most dramatic round of rent protest occurred during the Great Depression. Authored by Mark Naison, this chapter is the book's finest, in its writing, depth of coverage, its vividness and objectivity. Following tumultuous internal strife between the Socialists and Communists, the latter emerged as victors, taking control of New York's radical forces and, with it, the tenant movement. As Naison tells it:

> By the fall of 1930, Communist-directed Unemployed Councils had begun to experiment with two tactics that had a direct impact on the housing market—eviction resistance and rent stikes. The first of these, eviction

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resistance, proved to be one of the most effective weapons in the Party's arsenal. Coming upon instances where tenants had been forcibly evicted, Communist organizers would move the furniture back from the street to the apartment, while appealing to neighbors and passersby to resist marshals and police if the eviction were repeated. Since many marshals and police were reluctant to evict (and since landlords had to pay marshals for evictions), such actions often bought time for beleaguered tenants and gave Communists a new-found respect. Through the fall of 1930 and the spring and summer of 1931, Communists employed this tactic in almost every city neighborhood where they were active, although the bulk seem to have occurred in poor communities where the depression hit early and hard—Harlem, the Lower East Side, Hell's Kitchen, the South Bronx, Brownsville, and Coney Island.

Those activities escalated into the Great Rent Strike of 1932, which first broke out in the Bronx, a radical stronghold where whole buildings were occupied exclusively by Communists. There were ferocious pitched battles between police and tenants, as many as 4,000 *engagés* on the streets at one time.

THE REST of the thirties is a tale of intermittent tenant demonstrations in which revolutionary picket signs pronounced not only on housing issues but also on the Spanish Civil War, the Popular Front, (later) the Yanks Are Not Coming, and the liberation of Tom Mooney. Distant names float back—Peter Cacchione, Vito Marcantonio, Benjamin Davis, Jr., Heinz Norden, and other stalwarts in New York's left-wing pantheon.

The thirties also saw the blooming of a nonradical housing-reform movement whose seed had been planted in earlier decades; it sought remedy not on the streets but in the Congress and state legislatures. The decade witnessed the birth of public housing, Federal Housing Administration mortgage insurance, and more stringent building codes. The uneasy but often effective coalition formed between political radicals and housing reformers laid the base for the later imposition of rent controls in New York City by (a then reluctant) federal Office of Price Administration and to the passage by New York's legislature of the Redevelopment Companies Act.

The next chapter, related by Joel Schwartz, carries us from 1943 to 1971. That was likewise an era of radicalism and reform, one side represented by the United Tenants' League and the Metropolitan Tenants' Council, and the other by the passage of federal urban redevelopment and renewal acts and state and city Mitchell-Lama laws. New activists enter the story—Jesse Gray, Staughton Lynd, Esther Rand, Jane Benedict, Frances Goldin. The pivotal housing issues of the time were state extension of rent control, holding on to a fast-exiting middle class, tenant dislocation, and a relentless hostility to Robert Moses and slum clearance. Among the collateral political issues were Community Control, Welfare Entitlement, People Power and, of course, Vietnam.

The contemporary age, 1970-1984, is treated by Lawson and

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Reuben B. Johnson. I'll skip over these years, still so fresh in our minds. Among the outstanding events were a dizzying drop in large-scale construction and its replacement by microscale rehabilitation; the grafting of the Rent Stabilization apparatus on top of Rent Control; the co-op conversion movement; the emergence of nonprofit and community-based management and ownership organizations; and local Community Board review of development plans (ULURP in the argot).

The book's uncondonable failing is an avoidance of reflection and interpretation. What was the significance of all the strife and turbulence and what were the ultimate consequences? If tenants won this or that skirmish or battle, did they in the end win the war? Private builders and owners, the sworn enemies of thousands of activists, were the sole source of decent housing for unnumbered millions of renters over the generations. But no more. Unsubsidized private rental construction is now a marginal vestige of a productive past. New apartments for the working and middle classes have become virtually a pawn of government subsidy that, throughout the world, seems to yield more waiting lists than housing. I wish, too, that the authors had sorted out the respective roles of radical and reformer who embraced and separated in a mismatched tango; only one partner was truly concerned with housing as such.

NOR DO THE authors comment on how unique a New York tale theirs is. Other cities, to be sure, have had sporadic incidents of tenant-landlord strife. But nowhere has there been so protracted and wounding a conflict. New York's exceptionalism has several explanations, two of which stand out: It contained the nation's heaviest concentration of assorted radicals, skilled in tactics and organization. And, unlike most American cities, the majority of New York's rental population have occupied relatively large, commercially operated structures, most inviting targets for tenants bent on applying economic power to bankrupt a landlord or to bring him to terms. And, obviously, the extraordinarily high ratio of tenants to commercial owners gives the former lopsided voting strength. Imagine organizing a rent strike in places where the rental housing stock consists of two-, three- or four-story structures and where the voting strength of small landlords is roughly equal to that of tenants. Even in New York, eighty years of rent strikes tended to bypass the two- and three-family houses of Brooklyn and Queens. And even now, the state legislature has not dared to reimpose rent regulation on buildings with fewer than six units. The anatomy of New York's rental stock has also been its destiny.

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CURRENT READING

Testing Mother Nature

For many years now, some of New York's most promising college-bound students have vied for the Empire State Scholarships for Excellence, and no wonder. At up to $10,000 a piece, these scholarships can do more than just cushion the blow of today's ever-rising college tuitions. For some recipients it can make the difference between a ho-hum state school and the hallowed halls of Ivy. Needless to say, the competition is stiff and in most cases one's performance on the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) is the decisive factor in the selection process—a sad fact for many New Yorkers with an egalitarian bent of mind. They have persisted in their protestations, claiming that the SAT is a culturally biased exam that unfairly discriminates against minorities, thereby cutting many of the most financially needy out of the running for these scholarships.

In the May 11 issue of *Fortune*, Daniel Seligman's "Keeping Up" column brings a new twist to this never-ending squabble. Seligman reports that the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) has joined forces with an organization called "Fair Test" to level yet another charge against the beleaguered SAT: sexism. NYPIRG has recently produced data indicating that men were winning more than two-thirds of the Empire scholarships, even though women represented 52 percent of those taking the test. In addition, they discovered that, on average, men scored some fifty points higher on the math section and eleven points higher on the verbal—a curious inconsistency given the fact that the two sexes are equally intelligent. Indeed, to the fair-minded observer something might seem amiss. As far as NYPIRG was concerned, this imbalance pointed to blatant sexual discrimination in the testing process and prompted the headline, "Test Bias Costs New York Girls Millions in College Tuition Aid," atop one of their current newsletters. This sent sparks flying in Albany, with legislators scouring the public till for funds needed to concoct a "nonsexist" test.

But hold on. This kind of legislative mollycoddling on behalf of the fairer sex may not help. In fact, it's entirely possible that men are winning a greater proportion of the Empire scholarships fairly and that Mother Nature wants it that way. Batteries of psychological tests indicate that men's intelligence is more variable than women's, placing greater proportions of men at either extreme of the IQ spec-

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trum. This, in turn, gives men a natural advantage come test time. Since only the brightest students compete for the scholarship, bright men are statistically overrepresented.

One possible explanation for all of this, according to Seligman, may lie in the genetic code. He points out that in a 1978 volume of *Human Variation*, the clinical psychologist Robert G. Lehrke suggested that men's greater variability might have to do with what is called "X linkage." Genetically speaking, women have two X chromosomes while men have an X and a Y chromosome. It is thought that the presence of a second X chromosome had a moderating effect on the production of deviant traits be they good or bad. Because men lack this second X chromosome, they tend to be less homogeneous in their group traits than do women. As a result, more men than women are concentrated at the highest—and lowest—levels of intelligence.

Will such an explanation moderate the call for a "nonsexist" test? Probably not. Nevertheless, legislators should beware. Remember: you can't fool Mother Nature.

Tracking the Chronic Criminal

How can we best examine the size and composition of the criminal population? Until recently, a crucial component missing from most discussions has been any data for tracking the individual arrest histories of large groups of offenders. Now, using the Adult Criminal Justice Statistical System recently created by the California Bureau of Statistics (BCS), Robert Tillman, in his BCS Forum paper for the California Attorney General, has analyzed "The Prevalence and Incidence of Arrest Among Adult Males in California."

Tillman first demonstrates the enormous utility of differentiating between the prevalence of arrest—"how many people will be arrested at least once in a given time period"—and the incidence of arrest—"how often any single individual will be arrested." The criminal histories Tillman studies are for those men whose first adult arrest in California occurred in 1973 or later. The specific age cohort from this grouping he examines is males born in 1956.

With regards to the prevalence of arrest among this cohort, the data show that "by the end of 1985, when all of the cohort members were twenty-nine years old, fully 35.4% of the cohort had been arrested at least once." This figure then breaks down into some striking racial distinctions: By age twenty-nine, the probability of arrest for black males was nearly twice that of white males.

But what exact *types* of crimes are we talking about? Many of the arrests referred to above, as Tillman notes, were for relatively minor misdemeanor offenses. Accordingly, Tillman urges us to focus on the more serious offenses included in the FBI Crime Index offenses (e.g., murder, rape, felony assault). Although the proportion of the cohort arrested at least once for an index offense was less

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than the proportion arrested for any offense—as we would expect—index arrestees still made up 16.5 percent of the cohort. A worrisome figure, certainly, given the nature of these crimes. When again broken down by race, the rate for blacks is 2.8 times greater than the rate for whites.

To explore further the significance of these numbers, Tillman next examines the incidence of arrestees, which tell us how often any single individual is arrested. About half of the arrestees in the cohort were arrested only once; the other half were rearrested at some point between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine. Within this cohort in general, Tillman found a definite subset of repeat arrestees who contribute disproportionately to the arrest rates. In fact, he demonstrates that such numbers may be much larger than previous analyses have suggested.

Traditionally, we have defined the "chronic arrestees" as individuals with five or more arrests. This definition results in having 15.8 percent of the arrestees termed chronic and their accounting for 51.6 percent of the cohort's total arrests. The impact of such a small group of arrestees on the share of total arrests becomes even more striking when Tillman changes the definition of "chronic arrestees" from those with five or more arrests to those with three of more. The data then reveal that 30.7 percent of the arrestees were "chronic arrestees" and accounted for 69.3 percent of the cohort's total arrests.

To grasp the full significance of these percentages, Tillman suggests looking at them in terms of absolute numbers. The result is that 26,000 young males who where eighteen years old in 1974 were arrested three or more times over the next twelve years. The sobering public-policy significance of this trend is, as Tillman notes, "that every year California's criminal justice system must prepare to absorb 26,000 (and this excluded females) new 'chronic arrestees' who will return again and again to the system." Even if the criterion were raised to five or more arrests, the system still must absorb a new cohort of 13,365 of these people a year.

On the brighter side, Tillman finds that "the majority of those arrested for index offenses were never rearrested for another index offense." And although this means that few young males repeatedly charged with serious crimes return to the system, there's still a surprising conclusion that Tillman's data reveal: "It would appear, then, that being arrested . . . is not an uncommon experience for young adult males in California."

Materialistic Marxists

The British publication, *Marxism Today*, is finding a new, sophisticated audience of readers according to an article in the March 25, 1987 edition of the *Wall Street Journal*:

> Call them "yummies"—young, upwardly mobile Marxists.

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Their favorite magazine is *Marxism Today*, slick and sharply written and still, technically at least, a publication of Britain's ramshackle Communist Party. . . .

"It was a very shabby magazine in the old days, and it was excruciatingly dull," says Beatrix Campbell, one of its best-known writers. "That has all changed. Now it is engaged in this world. Its readers go to movies, listen to music. It is a popular, radical culture."

But Tony Chater, editor of the *Morning Star*, the Communist Party's struggling daily newspaper, is unimpressed.

"*Marxism Today* is pure, revisionist, right-wing gimmickry," he says. "Marxism involves achieving the common ownership of the means of production. Real Communists can't stomach *Marxism Today*."

But, of course, there aren't many real Communists left in Britain. Party membership is about 12,000; *Marxism Today*'s circulation is 15,000.

The magazine, the *Journal* goes on to tell us, has found that the old hard-line of the Party doesn't find many readers. In fact, a reader survey showed that only 17 percent of *Marxism Today*'s readers are communists. It has, thus, had to stake out new editorial ground with a broader appeal.

And so *Marxism Today* wrestles with what a "reconstructed" socialist agenda suitable for a consumer society might be, knowing the search is going to be a long one. Meanwhile, the editors seem to be saying, we might as well have some fun.

With wine, for example. The magazine's first wine column appeared in the March issue; it is to be a regular feature. "People seem to think it's odd and amusing that we should run a wine column," says Mr. Jacques, the editor. "They don't think the working class drinks wine. But that's not the way things are these days."

Dan Glaister, who runs *Marxism Today*'s Central Committee, points out that Marx's collaborator, Friedrich Engels, prescribed for him a steady intake of claret. "Anyway, wine has always been the drink for the masses in France and Italy and most of the rest of Europe," Mr. Glaister says. . . .

"Socialism does not mean self-denial," says the Stepping Out fashion and shopping column in *Marxism Today*'s March issue. The "pleasure of purchase" need not be "a ritual of guilt," it asserts.

The "politics of anti-imperialism" doesn't mean yummies can't buy clothes made in America. Indeed, says Stepping Out, certain "relics of a bygone America are *de rigeur* on the backs of savvy British protesters." Old bowling shirts from the U.S. are especially prized.

Marxism Today even sponsored a fashion show at a recent left-wing convention. Left-wing fabrics, it was pointed out at the time, should be "soft, and crumple proof. This is the cuddly left at its cuddliest."

The danger, of course, is that people with no political point of view at all will begin wearing cuddly left-wing attire. It's happening already. To these people, puns *Marxism Today*, "Lenin was the bloke who sang with McCartney."

Malignant Reporting

Newspapers across the country carried reports in April on how gains in cancer treatment since 1950 had been small and overstated

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by federal health officials. The stories were based on a General Accounting Office (GAO) report commissioned by Congress to study survival rates of cancer patients. According to the press, the study, *Cancer Patient Survival: What Progress has Been Made*, claims that the government has exaggerated progress in the War on Cancer, since most gains have been made through earlier detection, not better treatment. The director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), Dr. Vincent DeVita, Jr., reacted to the report by calling it "offensive" and said its conclusions were "unfair [and] politically motivated."

Such accusations are not unknown in the medical world. What is surprising in this case, however, is that virtually the entire national press and the NCI have misunderstood the purpose and conclusions of the GAO report. Although the report did acknowledge that the extent of improvement in patient survival in specific cancers is often not as great as reported, the chief finding was that patient survival has in fact improved in all but one of twelve types of cancer that the GAO surveyed. The report blamed the overstatement of survival rates on statistical biases that artificially inflate the amount of "true" progress—something the NCI has already concurred with.

Nonetheless, the report was widely interpreted as an attack on the cancer-research establishment. The source of this misperception seems to be a recent controversy about cancer research that arose when the *New England Journal of Medicine* published an article arguing that we are losing the War on Cancer. (Dr. DeVita of the NCI called the report "the most irresponsible article I have ever read.") But unlike the *New England Journal* article, the GAO report had been reviewed by a number of well-respected cancer researchers who all commended it for its balance, methodology, and accuracy.

How then to explain the reception given to the report? One possibility is that the NCI, which oversees the annual disbursement of some one billion dollars on cancer research, has recently come under the scrutiny of government officials. Representative Ted Weiss, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations and Human Resources, requested the study of cancer patient survival in order to resolve the debate over whether progress has been made in treating and curing cancer. But many, including Weiss, seem to have mistaken the initial mandate of the GAO study as evaluating the War on Cancer in general. The stated objective of the study was, however, an examination of *cancer patient survival*. Whether "progress" in fighting cancer has been made depends on whether one measures *absolute* progress (i.e., whether more lives were saved or extended in 1982 than in 1950) or *relative* progress (i.e., whether more lives were saved relative to the incidence of cancer). But as the report concludes, "whichever perspective one adopts, it is clear that progress has been made in extending patient survival."

Writing about the controversy surrounding the report, Daniel S. Greenberg of the *Baltimore Sun* suggests that behind the dispute lies the larger battle between two major camps in cancer research: pre-

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vention and treatment. The preventionists claim that the NCI is dominated by a curative mentality while opportunities for prevention are overpraised and underfunded. The release of the GAO report thus gives the public some insight into the world of cancer-research politics. As Greenberg observes: "When scientists become abusive, pay attention. The departure from professional decorum means something important is at stake."

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